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PREFACE

PART of the matter of this little book had been published in *The Englishman* of Calcutta, and I have to thank the editor for the courtesy of his permission to me to use the matter. It is here presented, but re-written. The book is not a disjointed collection of newspaper articles, but, God willing, a thing with a unity.

I had for some time intended to write a book on India, and marvel, now that I have written a little one, and realize as I did not before how fascinating a subject for a book India is, that I did not begin my time in the country with the idea of writing one some day. Then I should have begun collecting material for it from the beginning. I had a good deal of material collected, some in print, some in manuscript, when the publication of Miss Mayo's *Mother India*, and friends telling me that now was the time to get out a book, pushed me into writing one before I was ready, or had quite decided what kind of book to write. It is easy to collect material for books on India, but difficult to find threads to string one's beads on, and to be sure always which beads belong to which threads. Much of the material that I had collected remains unused, because it was decided that in this book an attempt should be made to reveal the character of India to the rest of the world; that is, how the Indian soul comports itself during the earthly pilgrimage; and much of my material did not seem relevant to that enquiry. The character of a country is the character of its people, to put it so, when naked. How a man loves and hates, labours and plays, worships, lives and dies, is how the naked man does, not the clothed. The appearance of his country, its forests and fields, belongs to his clothes. He has

made his clothes for the body; he has shaped the face of the land he lives in, or has greatly changed it from its state of virgin forest; they in turn have helped to shape his soul; but the core of it is straight from the womb of Time, and it is because of what it is, naked, that he acts as he does. So in a book on the character of India much must be left out that would have a place rightly in a book entitled, *India: Land and People*; a book that might be wrought into a unity, but with far more labour than the simpler book that I had to decide was all that I could attempt to-day. But in a preface to that smaller book may be given, without too marked an irrelevance, a note made for the larger book, the book that was to speak as much of the land as the people: such a note as follows here. When I wrote it, I had the Vaishnava lyrics of Bengal in my mind. In what setting were they written, I asked; in other words, what was the setting of the love of Radha and Krishna? It has been the same setting, with such differences as there are between, say, Bengal and the United Provinces, between the United Provinces and the Punjab and the South, great differences, but in a greater similarity, for in many ways India is much alike in all its provinces—it has been the setting also for all the loves of all the Indians; all their lives; where the Vedas were written, the Bhagavadgita, all the Puranas, the Upanishads; where to think of Miss Mayo with her pencil and note-books, where to hear her say, as I do in my mind's ear, that the material she wanted was—God forgive us, to think of her there is a desolation in my thought. This is the note:

Then there is the setting. The Plains of India are not wild and beautiful. Wordsworth might never have felt at home. But Keats would have felt at home; wonderfully drawn to the land and soothed and comforted by it. There are evenings in the Hot Season, when the light is so pure, the clouds so white, the grasses and weeds so green, the bamboos so feathery and graceful, the palms so still, the tamarind trunks and boughs so black, the horizons such a sweep in the clean, bright air, that one feels it all descending

like a benediction. The pain is only that no words can express it. Not ours at least; but in my soul I hear a faint echo of the words that I know Keats would have found. It is a marvellous setting for peace in a man's heart. For human love, not for such consuming passion as the Brontës are concerned with, as Madame Bovary was, but for the loves of Radha and Krishna—for a little of love's bread and wine, and betel nuts, and blue *saris*, and flute playing, and the scent of a body rubbed with camphored sandal paste—for that is there anywhere in the world a more perfect setting?

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STRANGER AND STRANGER

ONCE more a train journey; for I was to go to Patna for the Durga and Lakshmi *pujas*. I had two travelling companions, the elder a man with whose face I had grown familiar from seeing it at garden parties and elsewhere, but to whom I had never spoken. A face with something *rishi*-like in its smile; so that I had felt strongly drawn to the man. The younger man was the other's son. I spoke to the two, of course. The elder remarked that I had come very early to the station, 'contrary to the habit of Europeans.' He was right in saying that I had come very early to the station. I suppose, too, that he was right in thinking that what I had done was contrary to the habit of Europeans. I meant to talk to him in a way that should again be a thing contrary to the habit of Europeans; I meant to do that, whether he should be aware of it or not. I had come to the station, partly for the interest of watching the crowd, and partly to talk to whatever Indian fellow-passengers I might have.

To a man with a *rishi*-like smile one would talk of religion, which moreover is the thing to talk to any Indian travelling companion about. Ever since I learnt that, I have made a point of having with me on a railway journey a little book, in the production of which I had some part myself. It is called *Vaishnava Lyrics*, and is made of forty-eight verse translations or paraphrases of old Bengali religious lyrics. I take a copy of that book with me, when travelling. If I have an interesting-looking Indian as a travelling companion, presently I ask him if he has a book with him. He always has, and it is always a religious book. I ask him if he will let me look at it, and I give him my

Vaishnava Lyrics to look at. Once I so exchanged books with a Sikh in a most wonderfully clean-washed turban, a thing purer than snow. 'Almost immediately afterwards I joined an Englishman next door for tea. When I returned to my carriage, the Sikh told me that he had read every word of my book. I had not been quite prepared for that. That is not the point I would make, however, but this: that that Sikh was by that time ready to talk to me, forgetting that I was a foreigner and a stranger. As it happened (the man's occupation was that of timber merchant), we did not go very deep into anything. I had had a long spell of work in Calcutta, and this was to be my rest and holiday. I was not ready for any immediate deep discussion. We accordingly talked of light things, but not so light but that the unusual openness of the man impressed me greatly. One of the subjects of our talk was the work of Mr. Puran Singh, his books. I was the first to mention him and them. Mr. Puran Singh was his cousin, my companion then told me.

So to the man with the *rishi*-like smile one would talk religion. I opened the conversation by telling him that I was going to Patna; or he asked me where I was going, and I told him. 'Then we shall travel together as far as Bakhthiarpur,' he said. He was to change there for Rajgir, but that would not be until early the next morning. Rajgir, with Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, and Sarnath, is a place famous in the Buddhist annals. One of its stories is that, while the Lord Buddha was sitting in meditation in a cave on the hillside, the devil in a horrible shape came and frightened Ananda, his well-loved companion. Which the Buddha perceiving, he stretched out his arm, the rock of the cave cleaving to give it passage, and patted Ananda on the shoulder.

Rajgir is a place we visit, and I was glad to think this Bengali was going there. Still I said to him, 'To leave Bengal and go to Rajgir is not a very orthodox way of celebrating the Durga and Lakhshmi *pujas*.' His smile sweetened still more thereat, and, laying his hand on his heart, he said, 'There is *puja* there, and there is *puja* at Rajgir.' It was not

for me to deny that. I knew that there was *puja* in his heart.

Upon the starting of our train, by which time it was dark, I was invited to partake of a simple Bengali dinner, a thing I gladly did, not for the satisfaction of hunger, for I never dine, but as a mark of friendship towards those men with *puja* in their hearts. The meal consisted of *chupatties*, curried *alu* (that is, potato), and *sandesh*, the famous white sweetmeat. So we dined on wheat, potato, and sugar. When two Englishmen, father and son, or be it but two friends, eat a meal in a train, they sit together in a corner. Not so two Indians. Father and son, that time, sat almost as far apart as they could get, and as far, too, from me. Not from unsociableness, for the Indians are a highly sociable people, but from a feeling, as I understand, that with every meal there is bound up something of sacrament. I had thoughts of that while I ate. It came over me also, and as a proof of the way India has drawn me closer to her, for all these years of residence, that what would have been ten years before my greater or smaller embarrassment, when asked to eat unfamiliar food, and do it with my fingers too, was wholly absent. I had my share of that Indian dinner, as if nightly I sat down to an Indian dinner. Well, water will wear away the hardest stone; water, the softest thing.

After dinner we soon made ready to turn in. My companions wrapped themselves in Malida *chaddars*, those almost incredibly soft, warm things that they make in Kashmir. The Rampur *chaddar* is also famous. Some talk there was first about the word, whether it is *chādar* or *chaddar*. In Bengal, I was told, they make it *chādar*; in Bihar, whither we were bound, *chaddar*.

The running of the train is so timed, that one wakes at Mokameh Ghat for one's first sight of the Ganges. A great and beautiful river. All great sheets of moving water are beautiful; but in India, where the rivers are so huge, and flow so for the most part through alluvial plains, which means constant changes of river-bed, one gets, besides the impression of the beauty of running water, such a sense of its terrible destructiveness as Englishmen live and die

without. At any moment the Ganges or Teesta or Sone may revert to a long-abandoned bed, a bed that generations of men have tilled; and destroy homes and crops and cattle. An Indian river is Destroyer as well as Purifier and Fructifier. The Sone, which used to join the Ganges below Patna, now flows in miles above that city. One day there will be a flood, and the chafing river will remember its old channel, and pound away at the weak bank until it finds it. Then it will destroy, and stay not its hand until all is destroyed. Then the waters will shrink in the new-old bed until they appear as harmless as a lamb.

My companions were awake with me at Mokameh Ghat to see the river. Bakhtiarpur, where they were to leave me, was but a stop or two farther on; but there was time enough to note how the holiday spirit had deepened in them during the night. Very pleasant are the courtesies of men to each other, during the few hours that they are brought together. The elder man was more than courteous to me. 'Give up going where you are thinking of going,' he said, 'and come with me to Rajgir'; and I very nearly did.

If England is to show India that charity that race owes to race, it must not be forgotten what the food of the Indians is, what their rivers are, what their sun is, and that they remember Buddha. No people should be judged except after long and deep study, and then the judgment should be a silent one. There must be a judgment, because there is to be action, and no action can be taken except after judgment; but the judgment need never be spoken.

Ranade's father were acquaintances. They met, and a marriage was proposed between Ranade and Ramabhai. If the girl was found suitable, then the marriage should be celebrated. Ranade's father sent an old and trusted family dependant to the place where the girl lived. He was to interview her, and to examine delicately into the affairs of her family.

This old and trusted dependant reported that he approved, and then the more committing step was taken. The girl was brought to visit the Ranade family. The two fathers had agreed that, if Ranade showed any sign of unwillingness to accept the marriage, Ramabhai's father should urge that his refusal would involve the girl's ruin; for, since she had been committed so far, she was not one who could be bestowed in marriage on another. Ranade did show sign; he insisted that he desired not to marry again, and he begged his father to remember that he was no longer a child, but a grown man of thirty-one years, and one who ought not to be coerced. He offered to pledge his word not to marry a widow. His father was adamant against both argument and appeal; so that Ranade saw that the alternative was acceptance or an open breach. Finally he submitted, saying, 'Alas, that you will not listen to me, yet it is my duty to do what you say.' He meant that, as a father's orders are binding on a son, his own father should consider better what he ordered.

I shall have a note to give on the subject of the married life of Ranade and Ramabhai, but later, for at the moment I have another thing to deal with. That picture of the grown man standing for a whole hour silent on the verandah of his father's room, and he would have stood there all day, is one not to forget. I have it, with what else about Ranade is given here, from James Kellock's *Mahadev Govind Ranade: Patriot and Social Servant*, a book the whole of which is worth reading.

III

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON

AN old Indian gentleman, whose memory was failing him, took, to exercise it, to teaching his grandson poetry. So at least he said, but one thinks that, if there had not been that reason to give why he should teach his grandson poetry, he would have found another just as good. Now at school they had given the boy a book to study, called geography, and there had been no end of talk about places. One day the little boy read about Calcutta, near which his home was. He showed the geography book to his grandfather, and said to him, 'We are reading about our own city;' and then the boy gave the old man a list of Calcutta's imports and exports. 'But that is not geography,' said the grandfather. 'I have it in an ancient book, and I will show it you.' Then he went, and returned with the *Meghaduta* or *Cloud Messenger* of Kalidas. He translated to the boy the following tale from the Sanskrit:

A Titan was employed in the Himalayas by God to look after the treasury, but he defaulted, and was exiled for a whole year at the southern point of India. Being homesick, he wanted to send a message to his wife, but there was no messenger. Suddenly he saw the July cloud rising from the Indian Ocean. 'I'll send a message by this cloud.'

So he said:

'In the first flush of July the cloud rises; as the elephant charges the mountains with its tusks, so the cloud charges the sky with its tusks of lightning. O you born of the sun of the gods! O sun of the wandering heavens, take this message to my wife, and, as you go, I will tell you how to reach my home.'

Then he gave his directions:

‘When you come to the blue mountains, you feel the breeze becoming different. The wind caresses you. The white cranes make eye-pleasing circles before you. Peacocks stand on branches of the trees, their fans outspread, dancing to the drumming of thunder. At last you reach the Himalayas. And you will see where the rainbow bends its glory to make an entrance for the gods. You will find a woman there whose bracelets are too big for her wrists, because she has grown thin, longing for me. She is my wife.’

‘That,’ the boy’s grandfather then said, ‘is geography, not imports and exports.’

If we lived in that grandfather’s mind-world, there would be many surprises for us, but I think they would most of them be good ones. He must have been familiar with Moradali, that court musician of the Mughal emperor, whose absence when his master lay dying, and wanted Moradali to sing to him, caused him the wild grief expressed in a well-known song.

O King, for you I go from door to door.
Song’s mendicant, me desolation sore
Greet as a shadow on either hand. Oh, gone
The glories, and the palace floors upon
Animals prowl. But who can take away
The wild, wild beasts that on my lone heart prey?

The grandfather must have known the musician well, for Moradali taught his son music for many years; his son, the father of the grandson. Moradali taught him and another man, a rich man. He said a thing one day to the rich man that would have had no surprise in it for the grandfather, but would have surprised us; he said, ‘I cannot give you any more instruction.’ ‘Why not?’ asked the rich man; ‘you are teaching Mukerji so much.’

‘You see,’ replied Moradali, ‘Mukerji is a poor man. I have given you the training of a critic, so that, when good musicians come, you will know enough to support them, and they will be able to remain good musicians; but Mukerji

will have to make his living by music, while you only criticize it.' One doubts if that was any more Moradali's real reason, though in itself a good one, than the wish to exercise his memory was the grandfather's real reason for teaching his grandson poetry. One's intuition is, that of the two pupils the poor man was the purer-souled. Not only because he was poor, but because it was he and not the rich pupil who had a father who thought the *Meghaduta* was geography, and not tables of imports and exports, and because it was he who had the little boy for son. To the purer-souled, as all the world should know, one can teach more music.

The father had not always been poor. He was poor at the time Moradali spoke, because of a failure in health that had forced him to lay aside his law business. He recovered his health, and was able to resume his practice. From that day onwards, while he loved to sing, and spent the vacations going from country house to country house singing, he refused always to accept money.

The grandson was Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, and it was from his own book, *Caste and Outcaste*, an extremely good book, that I made my notes. This is a passage in the book :

All India knows the six o'clock melody. The world rises to it, and all the morning music that is made is based upon it. It cannot be altered. The evening melody is called the 'Tiger Beauty.' I have heard Moradali sing it. He would stretch his lips, narrowing them in the corners so that they took the sinister form of a tiger's mouth giving the hungry cry. At ten o'clock in the evening he would sing his Remorse Song, always, when he was with us. And though we children used to make fun of him sometimes, we all worshipped this man.

Once I said to Moradali, 'Grandfather, tell me; why music?' He replied: 'When the Lord made the universe He made men righteous, but they did not remain so. He gave them sculpture to reclaim them, but they played with it for only a few hours. Then he said: 'I will give them the power of melody; through it they

will come back to Me.' So He sang out the sun, and rolled out the thunder melody. (But this tune has been lost for two thousand years.) Thus music was created to bring back to God.'

I said, 'Did you go back to God in this way?' He shook his head and would say no more.

Note what is said there of the six o'clock melody; that all the morning music that is made is based upon it; that it cannot be altered. Who is to judge how right or wrong a thing it is, that in India so many things cannot be altered? Here is another passage:

I asked my father once, 'Why music?' He answered: 'I don't know, but I think this. Once on a time there were nine stars, and one of them was attracted by the life of the world, and fell away to come to earth. No one knows what happened, but it lost itself in everything that lives. From time to time it cries out to the other eight stars. That is music.'

IV

MOTHER AND SON

MY notes are still from *Caste and Outcaste*.

Our house was situated at the edge of the forest, not far from the town. In the evenings, after the lights were out, we used to sit by the open window looking towards the forest. I remember one evening especially; though I must have been a very little child at the time. I was gazing into the darkness outside when I saw something that appeared to me like a huge jewelled hand. This hand, with rings gleaming on all its fingers, was slowly coming towards me out of the jungle. The movement of the hand in the darkness was intense and terrifying. I cried with fright, and my mother, putting her arms about me, said: 'Fear not, little son. Those are only the eyes of the foxes and jackals and hundreds of other small jungle dwellers coming and going about their business.' I was overawed by the fierce power of life, and I watched in silence the tremendous black masses of dark trees with the emptiness gleaming all around them, and the innumerable fireflies flitting about. My grandfather, who was fond of quoting poetry, said: 'The earth is mocking the stars by throwing out her illumination,' and at last, soothed and quieted, I was put to bed.

We lived in the outskirts of a town near Calcutta, my grandfather, father, mother, and my brothers and sisters and I. As we were Brahmins, we had charge of the village temple which had been in the family for generations. . . . I remember every hour of our ritual, and there is a ritual for every hour of the day in India; the ritual peculiar to Brahmin households like ours, and the ritual of the peasant and the workman. The members of my family, the townspeople, the labourers

in the field, the many beggars—each followed an intricate and age-old pattern of life, from sudden sunrise, through fervid noon, to the heavy fall of night and silence.

In our household, my mother was the first one to rise in the mornings. She got up about five, and would always sit and meditate for half-an-hour so as not to disturb the morning silence. In India a woman is a goddess and must be ready at all times to be worshipped. When we children were up, we would go to her and bow before her and remove the dust from her feet. Every morning I would salute my mother and my father. To my mother I said, 'You are my God, my way to God,' and to my father, 'You are the Way, and the End. O my father, teach me to find the Way.'

My mother was a very simple woman. She did not know how to read and write. This will seem strange to western readers, but it is in accordance with the traditional education of a lady in India, and my mother being of the old school considered that anyone who could count beyond a hundred was too forward to be a lady. She used to say: 'Don't you think an understanding heart knows, if not more, at least all that is in the printed page? The heart is the king who knows all things and has all things. The head is only the palace. If your prince be dead, what good is the empty palace?'

My mother was a busy woman, for in India it is the mother who takes entire charge of the children and their education until they are ten or twelve years old. There were eight of us, and a large household to run, and my mother never spent less than three hours a day in prayer and meditation. Yet her life and personality were so quiet, her duties were conducted so softly and with so much gentleness, that as I look back it seems to me as though it must have been tranquillity and not energy that was the motive power in our house.

My mother could cook and did so, for cooking is a sacramental art and a part of the day's religious ritual. At midday she would meditate, and no one was allowed to disturb her, but in the afternoon she would

recite to us from memory parts of the epics, the old religious tales of India. She had been taught by her mother, and her mother had been taught by her mother, and so back for generations. We would listen for about half-an-hour at a time and then repeat what we had heard. Sometimes she would have two of us chant the lines, sometimes one at a time. . . .

All through my childhood and even after I had grown up and had been away on a pilgrimage, my mother would come to me when I was in bed for the night, and sit beside me and ask me about everything that had happened to me during the day. Then she would say, 'Now it is time to go to sleep. Have you enjoyed anything especially in the day's experience, my son?' When I would answer, 'Yes,' she would reply, 'Well, that was God's presence which you felt.' With those words she would leave me for the night. . . .

She had a strange healing power, and when we were sick, she would put her hand on our foreheads and say gently, 'It is not. It is not. It is not.' When we went to bed restless or feverish, how well I remember her coming to us and telling us to say those words to ourselves, over and over again, until, soothed and peaceful, we would fall asleep. In a day, or sometimes two, we would be well. People used to bring their children to her, and she would tell them to say the words for themselves, 'It is not. It is not,' and ask God to cure them. This appeal to the subconscious plays a large part in the lives of Hindu children. In India a mother will say to her four-year-old child, 'Say to yourself, you are brave, you are infinite. Nothing can be added to you, and nothing can be taken away from you.' Those two phrases grow into the child's mind. Again, he is taught that he must control the conscious, and learn the art of the unconscious; therefore he must learn to fix his consciousness on the following thought, saying to himself, 'I am free. I am brave. I am perfect.'

One day, when Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji was still a boy, he was standing with one of his sisters outside their front door, when a strange man stopped before them. He had a cord round his neck, and he began to low like a cow. They

were frightened, and so they were glad when their mother came, for nothing ever frightened her. She looked at the strange man out of her calm eyes, which moved not to the right or left like the eyes of other women, in search of other eyes. Then she said to the children, 'Go fetch me my box of money.' She took out a piece of silver, and gave it to the man, who bowed his thanks, and departed. Then the children plied her with eager questions. 'That man,' she said, 'has killed a cow by accident. Now he has put the cow's rope about his neck, and is going among the people begging for forgiveness. Everyone gives him a piece of money, which is a sign of pardon. People easily forgive an accident of that sort, and the man soon has enough to take to the priest, either to buy food for the people, or a new cow for the temple—generally the first, for even a lame calf costs more than he can collect. In this way he expiates his sin.'

The boy then asked what would happen, if it was not a cow that a man had killed by accident, but another man. Would he be allowed to repent and be pardoned? 'No, but he ought to be.' 'I suppose it is different—killing a man,' the girl said. 'Man of course believes so,' said her mother; 'but if you asked the question of the cow, what would be her answer, do you think?'

HUSBAND AND WIFE

AND now to return to Ranade and Ramabhai. One evening, in his own house, Ranade looked for the first time upon Ramabhai, and heard from her father's lips how they had been led to come. Ranade said to him: 'Have you with your eyes open considered giving your daughter to me? You are an old landed proprietor, and I am a social reformer, belonging to the widow-remarriage party. Besides I am going to visit Europe, and I shall not do penance for it when I return.' The girl's father replied that he had been told everything, and that he was resolved to give Ranade his daughter. Soon afterwards the two were married. Ranade insisted that the marriage was to be celebrated with only the simplest Vedic ceremonies, and without the many pre-marriage and post-marriage rites and festivities of ordinary times. It took place at the time of evening twilight. During the day Ranade worked as usual at the Court. When the Court rose, he went straight home. After returning from the place of the ceremony, speaking to no one and eating nothing, he went straight to his room, and locked himself in, his mind weighed down with an intolerable oppression.

With that day there began, however, a peculiarly happy and beautiful married life. On the evening of the day on which his new father-in-law went home, Ranade called his child-wife, and said to her: 'You have been married to me, but do you know who I am, what my name is, and so on?' Ramabhai told him what she knew about him. He then asked her about her home affairs. Next he asked if she had learnt to read and write. Finding that she had not, he had a slate and pencil brought, and taught her the first seven

letters of the Marathi alphabet. It took Ramabhai nearly two hours to learn to draw those seven letters without looking at the models. Ranade devoted two hours each evening to teaching her, except when something made it impossible that he should. She became a good scholar.

When she had made good progress with her reading and writing in Marathi, she said she would like to learn English. Ranade was both surprised and delighted, for that very idea had been in his own mind. Ramabhai began with an English reader. When she had finished the second, her husband set her to read the New Testament. He taught her himself. Ramabhai, in her *Recollections*, tells us that Ranade would hear her say the lesson that she had prepared the day before. First of all he would test her spelling and her knowledge of the meanings of the words, and then she would read the passage aloud. There follows in the *Recollections* a passage of biography that shows that Ramabhai had done more than learn languages. While she conned her English reader or read the New Testament, she studied also this man to whom her father had united her.

She was to read the daily passage aloud to her husband. If she could not do it, she tells us, Ranade would be angry. But his anger was not like that of most men. There was no loud exclaiming, no harsh speaking. Ranade would sit dull and sad, and heave a deep sigh; and he would remain dull and sad for a long time. His was not, she says, the wrath of impulse that comes, but goes as quickly as it has come. He would never get angry for slight matters, but when anger came to him, it lasted long. Poor man. He was a judge, a man distinguished, and here was this girl, and her difficulties with the words of an English book. On what of all that he had learnt in the world, poor, baffled man, could he draw to help her? There was nothing that he could think of, and so he must sit dull and sad. I sympathize with him. It is true: there are few things more difficult to see one's way in than this one of teaching. But if Ranade could not do the impossible, which in that matter would have been to bring about without expenditure of time what can only come

slowly as time passes, and the scholar's mind matures, he had all the industry of a good teacher. The perseverance.

This was shown once markedly in Calcutta, whither Ranade had come, bringing his wife, for he was not one to leave her at home, on the business of a Government Finance Committee of which he was a member. Government, for such a man, would find better work from time to time than hearing cases in a Court. One evening, shortly after their arrival in Calcutta, they were sitting in the garden of their bungalow, when a man came in with some Bengali newspapers. Ramabhai told the man that they could not read Bengali, and so did not want a newspaper, but Ranade said to him: 'We'll take it, seeing that you have brought it, and you can start delivering it regularly from next Monday.' When the man had gone, Ranade said to his wife: 'I would be ashamed to say that I did not know the language of a town in which I am to stay for three or four months.' Ramabhai replied: 'Well, if you think that I ought to learn it, teach me yourself. I am willing. Only I won't be taught by any one but you.'

Ranade said nothing at the moment, but he came home the next day late in the evening, and he was accompanied by a man carrying a bundle of Bengali books. It was the first time that Ramabhai had ever known him do his own shopping. He tried to read in several of the books, but as it was a long time since he had studied the language, he had forgotten it. So he said to the man: 'While I am at dinner, go to the bazar and buy a slate and pencil, and don't waste any time.' After dinner he practised the letters on the slate, and bent all his attention to the task of learning to read Bengali. He gave the whole of the next day to it, leaving his work on the Finance Committee undone, and the following day he set Ramabhai to learn the alphabet. He would hold a book in his hand, while he was being shaved, reading aloud and asking the barber the proper pronunciation of any word of which he was doubtful. Ramabhai told her husband in admiration that he was the prince of *gurus*. The result of it all was that after a month or so they were both able to read Bengali well.

It is not to be thought that these adventures of an Indian woman in the fields of study were all untroubled. Once, Ranade having to leave his home in Poona for work that he was doing under the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act, an Englishwoman was engaged to come daily to the house, and help Ramabhai in her study of English. This caused great indignation among the other women in the house, mostly older women too. They insisted that Ramabhai should not only change her dress, but that she should bathe after touching the foreigner. Otherwise she must dine in her own room, by herself. And once when the girl, at Ranade's suggestion, read an address in English at a public meeting called to advance a project for a girls' high school in Poona, there was a great outcry at home.

This would be as good a place as any for a word. The little boy, seeing the jewelled hand of the jungle, was afraid. What moved the elder women to anger in Ramabhai's home, when she threatened to bring the evils of impurity upon the house by having a foreigner to sit beside her, and teach her a language—surely it was fear? A vague dread of the anger of the gods. To people, such as the English and the French, among whom there are no ceremonial washings, nor a distinction between clean and unclean meats, the fear of Jew or Hindu of the consequences of any breaking of their rule regarding ceremonial washings, or regarding meats, must seem rather childish. It is not childish, if it is the expression of a general fear of life, a fear that is deep-rooted really, and attaches itself to surface things as an escape from itself. This is somewhat too difficult a matter for me. My own experience has told me of the possibility of an all-pervading fear of life, which will fasten on things of the passing hour, but is really a fear of something else. An old jungle fear surviving, perhaps. Such fears, and such fastenings of fear on passing things, will be found, I believe, in all people. How much of English conventional feeling springs from fear? When the House of Commons rejected the new Prayer Book the other day, what was the deepest-lying of its motives? Fear, probably. To a mind

such as my own there was nothing involved that, seen in the light of eternity, could be thought to matter. 'That Prayer Book or this—which?' The reply is, that in the light of eternity, which is for each man as soon as he understands, it did not matter a straw. One Liberal member of the House is said to have voted against the new Prayer Book as a protest against men's tampering with a 'noble classic of literature.' What inspires all such protests? Does not fear enter?

The question is one for psychologists. The whole world is probably fear-ridden, India being only more fear-ridden than some other parts. 'They are a fear-ridden people'—it is with that thought in one's mind, and with pity, that one should judge them. Being not too sure that we are not fear-ridden too.

An Indian girl (she is older now, and is one of my own friends) was being taught at a convent school. Her parents were of one of the highest castes. They had sent their girl to that Christian school, because there was no Hindu school where they thought she would be well taught. The girl, when ten years old, decided that she was a Christian herself; that is, that she loved the religion of the people she was among too deeply to think of herself as having another. So she declared herself a Christian, and began to say her prayers to Saint Anthony. Her father met this by telling her that his house could no longer be hers, nor might she use his name any more. He was persuaded by the mother, who argued that they could not be certain that they had a better religion to give the girl than the one she had chosen for herself, to consent that the girl should remain his daughter.

Some two or three years later the man met with a bad motor-car accident, and I believe there were other reverses of fortune. He saw them as the vengeance of his gods for having tolerated the abomination of his girl's apostacy. He was afraid, even terribly afraid. In his dreams he saw gods of destruction with blood-red tongues protruding from their mouths. He saw but one thing to do—to spend the rest of

his days in an effort to propitiate them. All Indians, I believe, have some of that man's terror in them. It would take one far to search it all out, and in the search one might add to one's own fear. It is better to put away all fear, and even the thought of another's.

VI

BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER-IN-LAW

THOUGH I have put that as my heading, there is to be very little on the subject of the relation between a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law in what follows. I would call attention, none the less, to what there is.

My notes are now from Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's *Reminiscences*. Rabindranath's early days were in two great particulars very unlike those of Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji. The latter gives one the impression that he and the sister about his own age spent most of their childhood together out-of-doors; in the village street, in the temple courtyard, in the jungle that came up to the windows of the house. In the house itself there was no part that he was not free of. Moreover, he was specially that sister's companion (he was older than she), and she was his. After bathing and dressing for the evening, the girl used to put flowers in her hair, and her brother had to find the flowers, and bring them to her. He might swim in the lotus pond, gathering flowers for her. Once, by the way, seeing her give fruit to a mendicant monk who was staying in the house, Dhan Gopal asked his sister why she did not give him flowers. He had just come in with those for that day. 'I am a woman,' the girl replied, 'and he is a monk. I cannot give him flowers, only fruit; because fruit has no sex.'

Dhan Gopal, as I have said, was free of space, and he had a sister for special companion. Not so Rabindranath; he lived between two worlds that he was shut out of—the whole 'outside' and the 'inner' rooms of his home. He saw the 'outside' only through bars, or, when he had grown tall enough to be able to see over a parapet, from a roof-terrace. Of the 'inner' house all that he seems to have seen as a very

small boy was what he could catch sight of by peering through glass windows. It was an unnatural life for him, one cannot but think.

He was the youngest of seven sons; so that before he could read he had elder brothers who might be beginning to make names for themselves, and one at least of them was doing so. His lot was cast chiefly with two boys, each about two years older than himself; one his brother and the other a cousin. A point to make here is that, as the brothers married, they did not leave the ancestral home, but lived on in it, the marriage not having lessened the number of the inmates of the house, but having added one to it. One comes in the *Reminiscences* upon the phrase 'the new bride,' which means the latest sister-in-law, as in this passage: 'When the new bride, adorned with her necklace of gold, came into our house, the mystery of the inner apartments deepened. She, who came from outside and yet became one of us, who was unknown and yet our own, attracted me strangely—with her I burned to make friends. But if by much contriving I managed to draw near, my youngest sister would bustle me off with: "What d'you boys want here?—get away outside." '

How the boy Rabi (for so he was then called for short) was kept a prisoner from 'outside' the grown man has told in these words:

Our days were spent in the servants' quarters, in the south-east corner of the outer apartments. One of our servants was Shyam, a dark chubby boy with curly locks, hailing from the district of Khulna. He would put me into a selected spot and, tracing a chalk line all round, warn me with solemn face and uplifted finger of the perils of transgressing this ring. Whether the threatened danger was material or spiritual I never fully understood, but a great fear used to possess me. I had read in the *Ramayana* of the tribulations of Sita for having left the ring drawn by Lakshman, so it was not possible for me to be sceptical of its potency.

Old enough, then, when a great fear possessed him, to

have read, but young enough not to know that there is no potency in a chalk ring. When Rabindranath says he had read in the *Ramayana*, he may only mean that he had had it read aloud to him, so may have been younger than one thinks at first. My point is that fear possessed him.

The only good that can be said of Shyam is that he would place the boy, with that chalk ring round him, where he could see out of a window. It was not a wide-open window to be sure, or one through the panes of which one could look; there were venetians, and by drawing them the boy could peer through, and day after day, he says, he passed the whole day peering through. What he could see was a tank, with a flight of steps leading to it, a garden wall with an immense banyan tree along it, and on another side a fringe of coconut palms. I should like a psychologist to tell me what effect on a sensitive mind such a concentration of attention would be likely to have. If there is little of the actual and tangible to hold the mind, the imagination has all the more room to play. Rabindranath makes it clear that as a poet, during his early years of writing, he was short of the material of real experience. He had only the world to express that had gathered within himself.

It may be, I have heard a man say he thinks so, that all India suffers from a lack of things to express. I do not mean, of course, as poets, but in life. It is a denuded country, for all its Delhis, Agras, Puris, and the rest, as Europe is not, as even Russia is not; denuded of things, buildings, pictures, books, etc., for the eye to dwell on. What is there in all Bengal to compare with Moscow and all that it holds for the eye to dwell on? I have been to Moscow, and remember watching, while in the picture gallery, a school-master with a string of peasant boys at his heels. There is no such event in a Bengal village boy's life, or if there is the thing, in Calcutta, the Indian Museum, for instance, to make the event possible, it is a thing of yesterday. India, and Bengal especially, is bare as all much-harried lands will be found to be. It was harried for centuries. What a contrast there is between the plains of Bengal and Italy, or

even between the plains of Bengal and the southern English counties. There is a poverty of interest in the country, one, I have thought, that the lives of the people reflect.

The too fierce sun, keeping them indoors, will have its effect on them. Inside their houses what is there ordinarily to deepen their spirits? Nothing. Of things to look at, I mean. The room in which Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, the painter, and his brothers receive visitors is a room of a very great and rare charm. It is the only room in an Indian's house in which I have liked to be. All the other rooms have been of such a poverty of everything, that it has been a pain to be in them. Poor furniture, poorer pictures, poor everything, and an incongruity of thing and thing added. Had I been condemned to live in one of the Hostels in which the college boys live, I should have died. The oppression of their mean poverty is just dreadful. When I speak of poverty, I mean artistic and spiritual. Think of an Oxford or Cambridge college and then of the Eden Hindu Hostel of the Presidency College in Calcutta. You shudder.

To return to Rabindranath, when he was seventeen, he accompanied an elder brother to England. The two first spent six months at Ahmedabad, where the brother was judge. Up to that time Rabindranath's physical world, except for a brief time with his father in Amritsar, when they were frequent visitors to the Golden Temple, and in the Himalayas about Dalhousie, had been confined to a Calcutta house, and what he could see of Calcutta on the way to and from school. That and a riverside bungalow somewhere near. In Ahmedabad the two young men, or the man and the boy, occupied the Shahibagh, a palace of the Badshahs of old. At the foot of the wall supporting a broad terrace flowed the thin summer stream of the Savarmati river. The Judge would go off to his court, leaving Rabindranath all alone in the vast expanse of the palace, with only the cooing of the pigeons, that so familiar sound of the Indian Plains, to break the mid-day silence. An unaccountable curiosity, Rabindranath says, kept him wandering

about the empty rooms. His bedroom was the upper room of the palace tower.

You see what a starved life. When I dwell on it, I soon forget Rabindranath, and the figure, wandering from empty room to empty room, is the figure of almost any Indian whom I have known. Not that I see their physical lives as all so led, but their intellectual and spiritual. They are a lovable people, few anywhere on earth, to my mind, more lovable, but starved.

Before this Ahmedabad time the home in Calcutta had for a time been full of *The Dream Journey*, the poem by which Rabindranath's eldest brother's name is known among his own people. How shut off, however, from his own home life the lad was is shown by this, that he has to say such a thing as 'Eavesdropping at doors and peeping round corners, we used to get our full share of this feast of poetry, so plentiful was it, with so much to spare.'

Rabindranath, empty of so much as his young life was, was much more fortunate than most Indian men; for most the emptiness continues to the dreary end, while for Rabindranath a change came with a 'new bride,' the wife of Jyotirindra, the fifth brother. With her came Rabindranath's chance to make friends with a 'new bride,' and he took it. Took it eagerly, poor starved lad. The girl was a great lover of literature, not merely a reader to kill time; not merely a lover of the Indian epics, which a woman in India so commonly is, without a grain of curiosity about any other writings, except it be one or two of the old Sanskrit dramas. This girl, this 'new bride,' was a student. Rabindranath was her partner in these studies, Jyotirindra being more occupied with music than with literature.

That brings me to another point. The Tagores were far more fortunate than all but the smallest handful of their fellow countrymen, in that they had music for an interest. A whole Indian family, it may be added, the parents, the sons, the sons' wives, the grandchildren, may all be studying music together, and to an extent hardly ever known in an English home. Rabindranath as a boy and a young man

was always singing; first the music of other men, and afterwards the music he wrote himself for his own songs. He is still a singer in that sense and a writer of song music.

Rabindranath, then, was most fortunate compared with most Indians—in having the interest of his brother's poetry, the interest of study with that sister-in-law, and the music; still his life was far too empty. First, the Tagore household was far too much thrown back on what it had of its own possession; secondly, each member of it was too much left to his own thought. What kind of thought it might be, this shows: Rabindranath, looking back upon himself, as he sat at the bottom of a class at school, says:

One of those problems, I remember, on which I used to cogitate profoundly, was how to defeat an enemy without having arms. My preoccupation with this question, amidst the hum of the boys reciting their lessons, comes back to me even now. If I could properly train up a number of dogs, tigers and other ferocious beasts, and put a few lines of these on the field of battle, that, I thought, would serve very well as an inspiring prelude.

NOTE. You have read how Dhan Gopal's sister could not give the monk flowers, because they have sex, but only fruit. One of my notes is a companion to that. Dhan Gopal, you remember, was the one who brought his sister her flowers. One day the monk had to go into the tank after him, and rescue the boy, whose feet had become entangled in the lotus stems. When they got to shore, the monk bade the boy take the flowers he had in his hand to the temple, explaining that flowers that he, a monk, had touched, were not things to give to a woman.

VII

MISS MAYO'S *MOTHER INDIA*

WHAT kind of book should Miss Mayo have written about the Indian peoples? If an Englishman is writing about Englishmen for Englishmen, he may reasonably, if his object is to move his countrymen to try to cure themselves of some failing or vice, confine his book to the single matter. I think that Matthew Arnold's attacks on British philistinism were fully justified. He wrote of Englishmen for Englishmen. If a Frenchman had written the same things about Englishmen, but in French, for Frenchmen to read, and had said nothing about any other part of God's Englishman, I should have thought him an odious man, and his book an odious book. It seems to me a rule that is imperative on us, that we make our spoken or written judgments of any foreign people so full that no reasonable man would bring the charge of one-sidedness against us.

So I should argue that any foreigner's book on India, not to be odious, should say some word of what is most lovable in the Indian character; some word strong enough to make the due impression. Whether Miss Mayo could have said the word about the Indians that it is most right to say, whether she could have said it, however good a will she had to say it, must remain for others to judge. I am going to try to show what it is that deserves the word. When that has been done, then those whom I convince that what I have seen in Indians is really in them, and who know Miss Mayo's book well, must judge whether she has said the word she should have said. If she has not, then whether she could have done; which means, whether it lay in her to see the thing. If it does not lie in her, that should be remembered.

The man at the railway station with the *rishi*-like smile had a nature that corresponded with it ; I mean the man of whom there is word at the beginning of this book. I knew infallibly (in this grave matter, where neither I nor mine are concerned, but those only whose salt I have these many years eaten, I am not going to suffer myself to be restricted by any conventional feeling whatever; neither by what convention requires of a man's modesty, or anything of the kind) I knew infallibly, I say, and instantly, that his was a beautiful soul. That he has committed a blacker sin than any of mine might be proved to me a hundred times over. I should say that it could not matter: God could by no possibility be angry with a man with so beautiful a soul. I am ready to trust that man to the world's end of purity.

Is he singular? Are there hardly any others like him in India? I cannot think so. His, I believe, to be a fairly common kind of Indian soul. With the possession of that beauty may go many weaknesses, incapacities, and so on, but there remains that something that Jesus or St. Francis would have loved. I think they would often have found it in India. It was the first thing I thought I had found myself, when I first came to India, which was in 1900. What I saw I tried to express in these words, addressed to an Indian boy. No particular boy: I had no one in my mind.

And yet thou speakest mutely, and with a spell
Of lustrous eyes, and upturned, eager glance,
And smile that never lightly came to grace
An earthly countenance.
I read that character upon thy face,
And follow all God's ways, the many and wise,
Wherein He fashioned thee, a flower of youth,
Marked with the truth of antique, honoured race,
Out of old souls uncouth.

That was the first impression that I got.

I am going to tell some stories, my purpose being to make you believe that the man with the *rishi*-like smile is not singular. The first shall be of a boy.

I was at the railway station at Bankura, waiting for my train to come in. Dr. Edward Thompson, the author of *An Indian Day*, and Mrs. Thompson were with me. We were seated on a bench, and were talking of Euripides, Wordsworth, and the high themes associated with those names, when I noticed that, in the soft Indian twilight, our group was being intently watched by a boy, a holy man's *chela*. I began to watch him as intently. The talk went on; there had been floods, and all the trains were running late. 'He knows,' I soon said to myself, 'that we are talking of holy things.' I meant that the boy did. I am sure he did. Not that he understood a single word that was spoken, nor recognized 'Euripides' and 'Wordsworth' as men's names. He knew because he was of a refined and sensitive soul. 'We are all brothers, with God amongst us: thou art, and these are, and I am.' I wanted to go to him, and stand before him, and say that. Instead I wrote it in a poem, as soon as I had got into my carriage, and the train had left the station. I was greatly moved.

Years later I was in a carriage in a train on the Kalka-Simla railway, in a carriage with a permanent way inspector, a rough-looking Muhammadan. I had not been long alone with him, when he asked me a question about the human soul, and my belief regarding it. That led to a talk about religion that lasted some time. Then he asked me to what extent men were educable. Were the differences that he had noticed in men due to this one's having been better educated than this other one, and so on, or did they depend on the original endowment? I answered that question at my ease, being interested. I gave the man an outline of the career of two Englishmen, Lord Balfour and my own brother, explaining that, even were you to give a man with common gifts at birth an education from all the ends of the world of education, you would not make a man to compare in anything with those two. We came to the station at which the man was to alight. He salamed to me before leaving, he did it with both hands, bowing reverently, and my recognition of his spirit rushed through me, so that it

made me dumb. After a little I said to myself quietly: 'He salamed to me as to God.'

I was once bicycling in Calcutta, and was meditating in my mind on the words, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' At a point I passed three grimy coolies, waiting before crossing the road until I should have passed. One of them said: 'Salam, sahib.' Again I had a rush of feeling, under the influence of which I said aloud (you may think it was silly): 'He knew what I was thinking of: he must have done.' Of all the coolies that I had ever passed in the street that man was the only one to speak to me, and not one has spoken since.

One more story. Years ago the Teshi-Lama from Tibet paid India a visit, and went to Bodh Gaya and other places sacred to the Buddhists. The old temple at Bodh Gaya, one of the holiest of things to Buddhists, had passed under the control of a Hindu *mohant*. There had been trouble between him and his following and certain Buddhist pilgrims, and in retaliation for something that the pilgrims had done, the *mohant* had taken action in a direction grievous to Buddhists. The Teshi Lama urged upon Captain O'Connor, an officer whom the Indian Government had attached to the Teshi Lama for the duration of his travels in India, that action should be taken to redress matters. Captain O'Connor formed a society to deal with the matter, and I was invited by MM. Satischandra Vidyabushan to join it and be its treasurer. I agreed to do that, and was summoned to a meeting. Captain O'Connor laid before us what he proposed should be addressed to the *mohant* in the name of the Buddhists of the world. To my mind, it seemed likely that the Buddhists would feel that the new situation was as grievous as the old, and I spoke in that sense, and so pressed it, that we separated without a decision; and we never met again. Not long after a card was handed to me one morning. It bore Satischandra Vidyabushan's name, and stated that he was accompanied by a Buddhist priest from Chittagong. Might they see me? They came, and we sat

down, and I waited to hear what had brought them. The priest looked at me, but did not speak. I made a remark or two, but about nothing very important, to Satischandra, and then again there was a little silence. I broke it by saying that I meant to visit Bodh Gaya soon, when I was told that I should be given a letter of introduction to the Keeper of the Buddhist Rest House. Then we fell silent once more. I did not like to ask what they had come for. The two men rose to their feet, and Satischandra motioned to me to rise too, saying that the priest wished to pronounce a blessing. He did—in sonorous Sanskrit. The two men then noiselessly left the room, leaving me standing where I was standing. When common day returned, I said aloud something like : ‘So—he had come for that.’ I told that story once to a doctor in Harley Street. ‘You told that story so well,’ he said, when I had finished, ‘that it almost brought the tears to my eyes.’ ‘I know it did,’ I replied: ‘it almost brought the tears to mine.’

The impression may now have been given that I am a sentimental man, all whose geese are swans. Not so. I once called on two ladies, just arrived in Calcutta, to deliver some message. I was with them only two or three minutes. I found them examining the *chits* of a man, a cook. They were to engage one. ‘Take my advice,’ I said, after a look at the man’s face, ‘and get some one else.’ When I next saw them, they told me that they had not taken my advice, but wished they had; for they had engaged the man, and had given him ten rupees, and had sent him to the market to buy the bazar, as we say in India. That was the last they saw of him. ‘How did you know that he was not trustworthy?’ ‘There was rogue written in every line of his sharp-nosed face,’ I said.

When, in 1907, I was doing duty for a time at the Calcutta Madrasah, whose Principal was on leave, I saw that it was desirable that I should have a long hour with a leading Muhammadan of Calcutta, and discuss things with him. So I asked him to come and dine with me, he and I alone. That dinner, and it was the only dinner that ever did,

gave me a violent headache, and what caused the headache was the effort I had to make to damp down and control my detestation of the man's character. A most unlovely man.

So, not being a man all whose geese are swans, I have perceived that loveliness of character in Indians, and yet my ways in India have not been such as to bring me near the heart of the people. I came out in the service of one of the Exchange Banks. Then I became a teacher, lecturing on banking and such like things. Then I was appointed librarian. I have always had to work hard, and partly at least over things in which Indians are not interested. I have had to work hard, to the shutting out of any long study of Indian languages, so that I have not moved among Indians, working with them, and talking their language easily. Those men among Englishmen in India who do both, district officers, missionaries, and others, have been far, far more in the way of appealing to Indians than I have ever been, and could doubtless tell many more stories than I can of the quality in Indians that gave my companion of that railway journey his *rishi*-like smile. Or if this or that man could not, it is because he has not my literary man's interest in things, and has forgotten.

Like other men whose avocation has been pure literature as distinguished from such things as history or philosophy, I have been too concerned with my own people to have much mind for others. I have lived in India, regardless during long stretches of time of both the country and its people. If a man is to do anything in literature, especially if he has a day's work to do besides, he must give his whole mind to it. He must live to that one end. If Indians could have helped me in my work, I would have cultivated their friendship. How could they help me? All I can say, then, is that I know the country well enough to be sure that the soul of it is fundamentally pure. If I have no more proof to bring forward than I have, that is accounted for.

The thing may, moreover, be said to prove itself. If Indian civilization was not fundamentally pure, seeing that it is so old, it would be notoriously rotten, an open and

exposed sore. English civilization is to-day manifestly an inferior thing to the civilization of older days. It is manifestly the Silver Age. The signs of it are on the surface. They stare at one out of every issue of an English daily paper. It is always so: what a civilization is the mere surface shows. If so old a civilization as the Indian (they all decline) had not 'salt enough to keep it sweet,' then the signs of it would be visible everywhere. There would be no need for any one to draw the facts from police court reports and hospital records. The signs would lie on the surface. So, if, taking a journey from Calcutta to Rawalpindi, and looking much out of the window, you get the impression of a race of industrious small cultivators who, whatever vices they may have, however wrong some of their social habits may be, live lives that have a core of soundness, you may trust that impression. That is the impression that you will get. Undoubtedly it is. 'If child-marriage prevails among this people,' you might say, looking out on the wheat fields of the Punjab, and noting the physical well-being of the men working in them, 'then the evil effects of it have been exaggerated.' There may have been far more child mothers like Pompilia in India than in Italy, is another thought you might have: if so, most of their children must have begun life with as good a promise as Pompilia's boy did.

VIII

THE MEN

THE stir caused by the publication of *Mother India* set me asking what I knew myself of India. What did I know of the character and social life of the people? Much less than I should have known, for it is stupid to live among a people, and not learn as much about them as possible; but not nothing. I had learnt something from the biographies and autobiographies of Indians that I had read. There had not been so very many to read. The Indians have not given themselves much to such writings, and those who have have seldom shown much excellence. Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji's book is a good one; Dr. Tagore's is not, I think, anything like as good, but it is good: the rest are very inferior to those two. I was once asked to address the Kristodas Pal anniversary meeting. Two lives of him were given me to read as a preparation. Considering that Kristodas Pal was the leading Indian publicist and politician of his time, a man, too, who would have made his mark at any time and in any country—considering, too, that the author of the better of the two books was Mr. N. N. Ghose, a prominent man among the journalists of his later generation, I could only say that the inferiority of the books was lamentable. Tired men, little interested—they were the books that you might expect of such men. It must be admitted that in many fields the little-competence of Indians is glaring; but that it is so now, and has been more so in the past, is a thing from which it would perhaps be wrong to draw any hard-held conclusion. It is partly, I think, a result of the long centuries during which India was a harried land. Even in my own short day I have noticed a great change.

That is a digression. To return to what I knew myself of India. The impression I had drawn from the books that I had read (they were all written, by the way, before *Mother India*; it is not as if they had been written as evidence against Miss Mayo) was of a singularly lovable people, if a not greatly-accomplishing race. Ranade, Ramabhai, even Ranade's father, wrong-headed from fear as he might be, the grandfather who thought the *Meghaduta* was geography, and not tables of imports and exports, Moradali, the boy's mother, Rabindranath's brothers, their wives—if they are not lovable people, where on earth are there lovable people? That there was not a fundamental purity in their lives, I had never for a moment doubted. If anyone had said to me of such people: 'Is there a great deal of impurity in their lives, do you know?' I should have replied, without hesitation, that I was sure there was not. What would have helped me to say so, was that the impression that I had got of the men I mixed with, was that they had, not more sexual impulse than myself, but less. I believe that to be true, and yet I wonder at it. Nothing would have been more what I should have expected than that, among people whose lives were so empty of interest, as I thought, sexual over-indulgence would be rampant. There is a class of Indians among which it is rife. Over-eating is rife in that class too. The men I moved amongst, Indians working in the banks, teaching, working in the library, fed sparsely. They were unlike the too-rich of the land in the matter of diet. I assumed, or I should have, if I had ever thought of it, that they were equally unlike them in their sexual relations. The men who talked 'smut,' the men whom I knew to be leading more or less loose lives, were not Indians, but Europeans. There was, of course, an Indian or two amongst those I knew whom I would not have trusted. They showed it in their faces. Most of the Indian faces that I have known well have had all the signs of clean living. As I have said, I have wondered at it.

I conformed to the rule of my people, and remained unmarried until I could afford to maintain a family in that

station of life to which it had pleased God to call me. I should have been happier, if, abandoning that station, I had had myself trained to be a carpenter, and had married a village girl. It has taken years of married life, having children of my own, much writing of poetry, many friendships with girls and women—it has taken all those to bring me to a state of relative sweetness in my sexual life; and there is one 'regret' that still dies hard in me, and I doubt if it will ever completely die. I live with the feeling that, in not marrying at the age when Nature intends a man to marry, and a girl of the age that a man of that age marries, I was defrauded. An Indian will at least not have that corroding sense. In other ways he will be less corroded; will, when he reaches my age, have a nature that has been subjected to far fewer strains and stresses. The sight anywhere, in a room, in the road, of a young child, at the time when I wrote such poems as *The Little Mistress*, *The Dress of Blue*, things long ago lost in the night of things—the sight of a young child in those days might arouse an emotional longing in me that was almost unendurable. The longing of a man for children may, for all that they are not born in his body, be intense, even devastatingly intense. I believe it can be intenser in a man than in a woman, and, if unsatisfied long enough, have worse consequences. The common comparative freedom of Indian men from the obsession of sexual thought that arises out of sexual starvation is due, I believe, to their living more natural lives than mine has been. I compare them with myself for choice, for by doing so I am the more certain of some at least of the matter.

Some few years ago, writing a preface to a small collection of paraphrases of Vaishnava lyrics, poems that belong to a body of Indian poetry to which much erotic poetry also belongs, having felt that the world of those lyrics was a happier world than ours, I said:

When I was a City clerk among City clerks in London suburbs, and we lived girl-starved lives, then such a breath from a happier world, a world of happy, playful love, not the terrible love of our erotic literature—

then such a breath would have been sweeter than anything on earth. To bear with one as one went in search of a purer air—but how little pure?—among the sodden clay fields about Harrow; even to bear with one when one went, in search of strength against temptation, into the churches of Willesden Green or Hampstead, and their atmosphere of hassock dust.

There was certainly salt enough of purity in the lives of Ranade, Ramabhai, and the rest, to keep them sweet, and there is enough of that salt to keep sweet the lives of the Indian men and women that I know or have known; men such as Pandit Gangulee, his sons, Satischandra Vidya-bushan, Benoyendranath Sen, Adityanath Mukerjee, Dr. P. K. Roy, his wife, Major K. K. Chatterji, his wife, and a score of others whom I have known. A score? Scores.

There is probably no man who is perfectly wise in his sexual life, and probably in every good in that kind there is some evil mixed. If you are to complain of the Indians, at least if I were to, it would be on the ground of their too easy tolerance of little-competence; but even there I should feel that the ground was so unsafe, that it would be better to refrain. There is so much little-competence in all the countries of the world, that one is forced to conclude that Nature intends it. Why she should I do not know: that she does is plain enough. If men can provide themselves with a sufficiency of food, clothing, and shelter, Nature is quite content with them. Little-competence, then—yes, it also is divine.

I may be thought extravagant if I say that I believe, which I certainly do, that the ordinary man at work in Calcutta, far from being vicious, is a man in whose life there is something of asceticism. It may not be wholly from choice; indeed I know that it is not wholly from choice, except in a rare case. Sir P. C. Ray has always given me the impression of being a man in whose life there was certainly some asceticism. He is well enough endowed with this world's goods to afford indulgences. I do not know for certain, but I imagine him to be one of those many Indians

who spend much of their superfluity in daily hospitality to poor students. I am using 'hospitality' in a misleading way, perhaps; for what they give the young men is not food, but money for their food and shelter. It is looked upon in India, as it is also in Japan, I understand, as the duty of the well-to-do to support students, and I understand they do it ungrudgingly. I have sometimes known who the student was, how much a month he got, and whom he got it from. I have known the particulars well enough to have something wherewith to measure the unseen rest.

The man working in a Calcutta office will ordinarily receive a salary that enables him to support himself and his family, and those dependent on him (there are almost sure to be some dependent on him, and the obligation to maintain them, in addition to the members of his family proper, is never repudiated; Hindu society sees to that), only if they all exercise a degree of sparingness that amounts to asceticism. He bears his rather hard lot with cheerfulness. Such a one, it will be obvious, is kept from vice by not having the money that vice costs. Grant that. Yet I imagine that, if he was determinedly vicious, he would find the money. There will be usually some small hoard that is to provide the dowry without which the daughter or daughters cannot be married, and for a man to have, unmarried, a girl of an age to marry, is considered a disgrace. The ordinary poor man's life will have contained some temptation to spend that money, and that temptation overcome. It will have added a line or two to those lines of asceticism in his features that the rest of his life has brought.

That word a moment ago of a Hindu girl's dowry reminded me of something that I had forgotten. I knew a poor Indian, and helped him once when he lost his post; so that, when the time for another daughter to be married came, and he was short of money, he thought he might appeal to me. I being then less able to spare money, having now children of my own, thought I would first consult one or two Indian friends, asking them what degree of misery the man might fall into, if I did not give him the money. I was

told that he might have to go from house to house among his neighbours, but that the money would be raised; in one way or another it always was.

The man working in a Calcutta office, getting that small salary, will as likely as not live in a village, and come to town daily by train. So that, as well as having no money for vice, he will have no time either. I am convinced myself that he is by natural disposition more a clean-living man than I am myself. If you have imbibed a prejudiced feeling against Indians as sexual beings, as you may have, and it be a deep prejudice, what I have just said may make no deep impression on you; but you may remember that you were told that the ordinary Indian is too poor and too hard-worked to be vicious, both he certainly is, and has a look of asceticism on his face. I have only to step from this room to the next to behold the face of an ascetic-looking man, and in other rooms of the library are others to be found.

All this is negative—what the Indian man is not. What is he? This story will tell a little. An Englishman had a Bengal village to visit, there being an anti-malaria agency to open there. The Englishman's wife went with him. Because of too deep ruts in the road, and its not being safe to motor all the way, the two entered the village on foot, having walked the last two miles. The lady was the first Englishwoman ever seen in the village, and the villagers were deeply impressed that she should have come, and more so that she should have come on foot. So they felt that they must show their gratitude—that an Englishwoman should have walked with no other errand than their preservation from disease. Being poor, what could they give her but some of the produce of their little gardens? They would send her some fruit. It was conveyed to her by a man of the village, who, ordinarily going to Calcutta for his work by the first train, and returning by the last (not a very late train), had to make special arrangements. What he did was to come up to Calcutta one Sunday afternoon; spend the night at the railway station, and make the offering of fruit early on Monday morning. That left him plenty

of time to be punctual at his office. Mark this. The man would think it nothing to do a thing like that. It would appear to him to be all of a piece with the asceticism of his days.

'If we knew,' some one might say, 'what you and your Indian friends talk about, we should know the Indian mind better. What do you talk about? Is that a question you could answer?' I could answer the question; yes, certainly I could.

The first Indian I was intimate with was the late Monmohan Ghose. In that he was a poet, he was uncommon; in other ways, he was not uncommon; he was much as other clever Indians of the class of society to which he belonged, the same as the class to which Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and the late Lord Sinha belongs. He used to come to tea with me of a Sunday afternoon, coming a full hour before tea-time, and staying a full hour afterwards; then we'd go for a walk, separating somewhere in the street. He talked of his work at the Presidency College, but not too much, not thinking it much worth talking of, which I doubt if it was. Our talk was chiefly of poetry—of his poems, of mine, and of the great poems of the Greek and English languages. A little of the Latin poets also, but only a little. He had written a short poem on London that Mr. N. L. Hallward admired, that Charles Russell admired (he spoke to me about it), that we all admired. He spoke much of my poems, which (God bless him) he admired, being the second or third person in the world to do so. He spoke of Tagore's work, spoke in praise, and it was a day, be it noted, years before England 'discovered' Tagore; it was some such date as 1902. He spoke of paintings too; of Botticelli and Michelangelo. My early reading of Turgenev was all done in copies borrowed from Monmohan Ghose. I remember his quoting Charles Russell as having said that he, Russell, loved most such didactic poetry as Lucretius's, and the Duke's speech on death in *Measure for Measure*; that for the purest lyrical poetry he doubted but he had a defective ear. He read aloud poetry to me, or I did to him. I used to think, listening to him, of the song the dying swan is fabled to sing, or

actually does. He once asked me, and I had great difficulty in not laughing, and now see that I should have laughed, which I thought the better to write poetry on, tea or wine. I replied that I didn't think either helped in the least. But then I write myself, as a rule when walking in the streets. If nothing comes of itself, well and good; it has not been God's will that I should write anything that day. Monmohan thought of things differently; of poetry as a thing to sit down daily to, and write each day its line. Some of his poetry was weak enough, to be sure; but then some of the poetry of all the men who have laboured as he did, has been weak enough. No great poetry was ever written so.

With another Indian friend, a surgeon, and a very skilful one, there has been talk of his work; stories have been told of happenings in his hospital. He talks very interestingly of all that, and very much, I feel sure, as any surgeon of the West would do. There has been talk of the library of which I have charge, and whether it is to remain in Calcutta, or, as from time to time is rumoured, be moved to New Delhi. The surgeon is deeply interested in that matter. There has been talk of the unrest in India, a thing that both he and I see as at bottom an economic question. India is really too poor to have so much of her trade, banking, scientific work, and administration done by aliens, who both cost more while they are at work than men of her own race need cost, and spend a great deal of their salaries and profits, and all their pensions, outside India. So the surgeon and I talk of that, and how mournful it is. The employment of each Englishman means an unemployed Indian, or one pushed down into a lower class than he was born into. There has been no talk to speak of of my work (I mean now my writings), because the surgeon does not feel sure of himself there. He may even not be interested in the work itself. He is interested, even deeply so, that I should do such work; for he has asked me how exactly I do it; what my wife's interest in it is, and other deep-probing questions. He will write himself, he hopes, when, having saved a certain sum

(he has told me how much; it is far more, I may remark—it may be because of other persons' influence—than I should wait to see accumulate), he retires from surgery. He is a Nadia Brahmin. 'All Nadia Brahmins are poets,' he will say, and you may believe him; they are. It is a little strange. One cannot say, 'All Norfolk men are poets,' or anything remotely like that. He once told me with much fine feeling how, his father being on a visit to his son and his son's wife in Calcutta, and the old man, then very old for an Indian, having asked his son to say the prayer that day at their family worship—how he had felt forlorn like a child; to have to do what he had always looked to see his father do. He was not sure that he would find a word to say. It had all been right, when the time came, but he had been very greatly disturbed in his soul. An Indian will tell you a story like that, and you learn that they have family prayer, a thing you had somehow assumed was no part of their habit.

The late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was a man I had known well. He was a good, but not great mathematician, and a Sanskritist, but how deep in Sanskrit study I do not know. His teacher of mathematics at the Presidency College, a Scotsman, soon after Ashu Babu, as he called him then, took his degree, said one day, 'You'll be going to Cambridge soon?' 'No,' said Asutosh; 'why should I spend all that money and time, when I can get all I want in life without leaving India?' I think he did get all he wanted. He did well at the bar; was made judge; was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University for a term, and re-appointed I forget how many times; was all the time influential at the Asiatic Society, the Indian Museum, the Imperial Library; on an equality with men as distinguished in their separate ways as Sir Thomas Holland, the geologist, Sir Denison Ross, orientalist, Dr. Annandale, zoologist.

He had a prodigious memory. I once was offered a second-hand book for the library. I put it down in the list for the Council to see. When Sir Asutosh, running his eye down the list, came to it, he said, without a moment's pause, 'But what you should get is the four-volume edition

published by Macmillans in —, ' and he named the year. I used to say, having known him long enough, that I believed he could reproduce, and correctly, every word on every title-page of a book that he had had in his hand. His house was crammed with books. What gave him his opportunity at the University (the position of leader that he won, was strongly contested for a few years) was, I have heard a good judge say, that he knew by heart the wording of every one of the Regulations, and how many of them, if more than one, bore upon any point. There was no other member of the body that began to have such a knowledge.

Sir Rash Behari Ghosh, another lawyer, had such another memory. They say that, confront him with any witness that he had cross-examined, it might be twenty years before, and in a minute or two he would tell you the man's name, the name of his native village, the case he appeared in, on what side, and what questions in cross-examination he, Sir Rash Behari, had put to him. Incredible? Truth-speaking men have told me it verily was so. I believe them. For an Indian to have exceptional power of memorizing is very common. That fact has gained them all the reputation of having remarkable memories. That is a mistake; most of the Indians that I have had to work with have been conspicuously deficient in memory. Some of them have had no memories at all for such things as the books we have bought, when we bought them, who have been in, what about, and so on. They have forgotten everything as children forget, who are too young to remember. I could tell of remarkable instances, but I have not time.

All that by the way. Sir Asutosh had an amazing memory, not only an amazing power of memorizing. He was a big man in all ways. I walked behind him one day across a broad lawn, noting the lines of his back, and the strength of character that they indicated. He and I never spent much time together. We met regularly and frequently, but had time for talk only during the few minutes before a Council or a Board began, and, till our ways parted, when we left. He spoke very openly always—about what was happening,

books, politics, anything. Lord Curzon sent us a huge enlargement of a photograph of himself to hang up in the library. He had taken a great part in the founding of the library; there is that excuse for him. When I showed it to Sir Asutosh, all he said was, 'His Lordship might have waited for us to ask him for it.' He said other things to me, things that I dare not repeat while I am in service. There was never anything like, 'That is between you and me.' He either knew one would not go blabbing, or he did not care if one did. If the last, he must have felt that his position was impregnable. It pretty well was. He had enormous capacity, and knew he had, and knew he was indispensable. I have often said that, had I had the power, I'd have sent him to England early in the war, to run some department of first-rate importance, and win us the war a year or so sooner. He would have done it; no one will ever persuade me to think differently.

The story that all this is to lead up to begins with an event of the year 1903 or 1904, when the Universities Bill was passing through the Legislative Council. Sir Asutosh was a member; took a leading part in the debates, but not always, Charles Russell thought, on the side of reason. So Russell wrote a parody of a Tennysonian idyll, making fun of Sir Asutosh and company, and a little of it rather biting fun. Some years afterwards Russell said to me, 'Asutosh has never forgiven me that parody.' It never occurred to me to question that. Russell was killed in the war, and it fell to me to gather papers of his together, and make a book of them. It wanted, of course, to include that parody and some others. It would be very stupid, I thought, to do a thing that would disturb the exceedingly friendly footing on which I had always been with Sir Asutosh (it had been exceedingly friendly; remember that, please), when a word or two beforehand would make all right. So the next time he and I met, I said:

'Do you remember a parody of Tennyson's *Idylls* that was published in the *Statesman* [one of Calcutta's newspapers] in 1904?'

'Yes. Why do you ask?'

'Do you know who wrote it?'

'Didn't *you*?'

'I? No! I can tell you who did though. It was Charles Russell.'

'Was it really?' and Sir Asutosh looked up at the ceiling, tilting back his chair, and laughed a great bull laugh. 'I have always understood it was you who wrote it,' he added, when he had done laughing.

Then I told him why I spoke of it; about the book I wanted to put it in; had he any objection?

'Objection! Why should I have? One doesn't take such things seriously!' And at that he tilted his chair again, and again roared out a laugh at the ceiling. And that was the man who had never forgiven Russell the parody, thinking all the time that it was I who had written it. I don't now believe that Russell had done anything that Sir Asutosh had not forgiven.

I have known no Indian the equal of Sir Asutosh in capacity. Lord Sinha, I should say, had a finer mind, or better perhaps to put it, a more delicate nervous system, with the mind that goes with such a system. Lord Sinha was to Sir Asutosh, one might say, as Lord Rosebery was to Lord Salisbury.

Sir Asutosh had come for a Council. He was talking to his colleagues about the state of India politically. I was not listening, having notes to make, when I heard, or thought I heard, Sir Asutosh say, 'The whole thing's rotten.' 'The whole thing's what?' I asked, looking up. 'Rotten, rotten,' said he. I must not repeat what he said next, but I may say what he ended with. It was, 'If there was a Royal Commission now [it was 1923], and I appeared before it as a witness, if I told them everything I think, it would blow the roof off,' and he looked up at the ceiling.

During his last few months, having now retired from the bench, and being no longer Vice-Chancellor, Sir Asutosh was much in Patna, where he was often to be seen, at a students' play, at Professor Coupland's Russell lecture, or

what it might be, accompanied by a little grandson. Said a man who watched them closely, and told me afterwards, 'However Sir Asutosh might be a man of iron in his relations with all others, there was not the smallest bidding that that little grandson could not make him do.'

To go back many years. Sir Asutosh's term, not the first, as Vice-Chancellor was shortly to expire. He assumed that it would be renewed, as it had been before. The Government had decided, however, that there must be a change. The first intimation he had of it was from a man's asking him how heavy the work of the Vice-Chancellor was; and who his successor was to be, he first learnt from the newspaper. He wrote a letter of remonstrance. I have heard Mr. Gourlay, who was Private Secretary to two Governors of Bengal, Carmichael and Ronaldshay, describe that letter as the best-written document he had ever read, and completely unanswerable.

And now for another, a very different man. I know him simply as Umraosingh. I have met him only once, but had passed him in the street, when I was struck by his exceedingly fine and picturesque looks. When I met him, he was talking to some others, and I heard him say, 'All the religions are now open to everyone.' He meant, I think, that you might worship God according to the forms of, say, the Hindus, yet be free to take from Christianity anything that would help in your life's pilgrimage. From Christianity, or from any other religion.

'There is nothing,' I said, drawing his attention to me, 'that the Indian is more deeply interested in than religion, and there is no race in the world more interested in religion than the Hindu.'

'Are you interested in Indian religious poetry?' Umraosingh asked.

'Very deeply. I've made English verse paraphrases of such poems.'

'Have you published any of them?'

'Oh, yes; two books. One is mostly prose (it is called *Religious Lyrics of Bengal*), but there is verse in it. One is:

Through all things running there is a golden thread.
 I am it, I, the eternally blossoming seed.
 I am the endless fire of truth stars need
 To stretch from one to one, and planet wed
 To planet, man to man; and then it goes
 To silence of gods, and silence of gods beyond,
 Where is the ultimate energy of repose.

'Very beautiful.'

'Yes, isn't it?'

Then Umraosingh talked to me. He poured out things—about an Indian writer of Persian poetry, whose name, unfortunately, I did not catch; about new idioms, such as a poet uses, and how the little men of the world first cry out against them; then, when the poet is famous, imitate them; of Iqbal and his poetry; of Puran Singh and his translations; of Brainerd Spooner of the Archæological Department—

'He was almost the most wonderful man I've ever known,' I interrupted.

'He studied Sanskrit at Benares, living just like us.'

'I know, I know; and Buddhism in a temple in Japan, and they let him see things that no other European had ever been allowed to see.'

We were silent for a little. Then in the distance I saw Umraosingh's two little girls. They were dressed alike, and very much alike in feature, and they made you the most adorable little-girl curtseys, when saying how do you do? or good-bye. I had had one of them next to me at tea (it was a tea-party), and was, for the moment, very much in love with her. Wrong? Not to have been would have been too utterly stupid.

'What are your little girls' names?'

'Amrita and Indira' [stress on second syllable, and 'i' long].

'I published a volume of English verse not long ago. Not translation this one, but my own verse. There is a poem in it to a little Bengali girl, called Indira, but her name is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable, and the "i" short. You must pronounce the name so in my poem, or it won't scan.'

A woman sang two songs, an Englishwoman.

'The words of that song,' I said to Umraosingh, after the second, 'are out of the Hebrew Bible. Did you know that? [He nodded.] They are Ruth's words to Naomi, her mother-in-law. There is a four line poem to Ruth in my book:

'Her name is spelt in four bright stars.
Their sound is the music of old sweet bars.
The whole world gathers up its truth
At the beauty and mercy and trust of Ruth.'

But I did not say the last word, for Umraosingh spoke it for me.

'I was told in Bengal that Indira is the feminine of Indra.'

'That is wrong. Indrāni is the feminine of Indra. Indira is not the feminine of any name, but is the goddess's name—Fortuna.'

A copy of the book of mine last spoken of was brought. 'Let me have it,' I presently said, 'to write your name in it. Let me show you,' I said, when that had been done, 'the piece that I think you'll like most.' I showed him this:

Give me thy hands, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none.
Give me thy lips, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none.
Speak with thy voice, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none;
Formless, timeless, unsearchable one.

'There's an echo of the *Vedanta* in it,' Umraosingh said.

'I know; that's what made me think it would be the one you'd like most.'

'But they talk just like Europeans,' you may say, 'they are just like us.' They are not just like us, but profoundly unlike us. Having much sympathy, they will be likest Europeans, when they are with us, and talking to us. Then we shall be most like Indians, if we have sympathy.

I could go on with this kind of reporting for pages and chapters, of course, recalling talks I have had with Indians. What has been said must be enough. To think that there is

something radically vicious in a civilization that can throw up abundantly such men and women as I have known (of women, Mrs. R. C. Bonnerjee, Mrs. A. N. Choudhuri, to mention only two) is just preposterously silly. Many of them may come to grief, like Branwell Brontë; in their family annals may be stories as sad as Harriet Shelley's; yet if the count was strict, I think the lighter record, not in numbers, perhaps, but in depth of misery, would be the record of the East. How many of our Baudelaires have ended disastrously in mad-houses? Far more than have in the East. Peace, peace.

IX

THE WOMEN

IF a man is writing a book on the character of India, he must say what he can of its women; but, if the writer is a foreigner, he is likely here to know least at first-hand. Because of the general seclusion of women, of course. And there are not many books from which one could learn. Of those that there are, I have read some, but not as many as I should have read. There is Mrs. Urquhart's *Women of Bengal*, a direct telling of what Bengali women are as she has known them. She has known many intimately. Then there are the novels of Bankim Chandra Vhattejee, which I am afraid I have not read, Romesh Chandra Dutt's *The Lake of Palms*, which I have read, and other novels. All of them, of course, show one something of the lives of the women of our time. One learns something here, a little more there. Then one will have known at least a few Indian women in the flesh, as of course I have. From all I have learnt I should say that Indian women generally are more pure than the men, and more competent too; more active, more persevering, more intelligent. In the *Lake of the Palms*, Romesh Chandra Dutt, a man of considerable competence himself, gives it to his women to make the better show. There are two sisters in the story, and they are very lovable natures. A little idealized, perhaps. You have read that in India a woman is a goddess, and must at all times be ready to be worshipped. I gather that she must be ready, too, to be idealized.

I have mentioned the Vaishnava lyrics that I paraphrased. They tell of Radha and Krishna. Under the influence of those poems I wrote a poem called *Radha*, and I have a story about it that is relevant to what I have been

saying. Before I tell it, I see a point or use in quoting from the poem; so if you will forgive that—

Go away, Radha, go away, my girl;
I know that long dark hair without a curl,
Those almond eyes, that subtle nut-brown hue,
Those red-stained feet, that clinging scarf of blue,
And that deep heart that beats beneath the breast
That Krishna's happy fingers often pressed.
Go away, darling; it is a land where night,
Opening lotus-petals, pink and white,
Under starred skies, and silent as they of sound,
Makes your sweet body supple, soft, and round;
Where sunshine makes the day a philtred cup.
It is in vain your men-folk shut you up,
Since I have seen the child, and have the sense
To feel the rapture, wine-drugged, sharp, intense,
That you would give, grown, Radha, a maiden, ripe,
Listening, with oft-kissed ear, for Krishna's pipe,
If you heard this, my singing, and came to be
Mistress of mine, and loved and worshipped me.

There is more of it, but that will do. My story is that a day or two after the poem was published, I sitting in the librarian's room, there entered a Shastri of my acquaintance, who standing there, I, I am afraid, still seated, said: 'I have come to thank you on behalf of my nation for your poem on Radha.' He said that; then left the room abruptly. I think that that could have happened only in a country where there is a great deal of idealizing of women.

A point to bear in mind, when the subject is the social life of the women of India, is this—that if the treatment that is meted out to one is meted out to no one else, is meted out, say, because one's husband is of that peculiar mind, it will be much more oppressive than if it is known to be the treatment prescribed by the rules of the society to which one belongs, and is the same treatment with which others are being treated. Thus, if one is the only Hindu wife who must veil her face, in her husband's presence, if a third person is present, and, if that third person is the man's

mother, must not address a word to him, it will feel oppressive; but if one knows that that is the rule for all Hindu wives, it will lie more lightly upon one. So too, if one is the only Hindu woman who may use personal names only when addressing those younger than oneself, and that because it is one's husband's strange whim, it may well seem humiliating; but if that is known to one to be the rule for all Hindu women, the case is greatly altered. Those are, all of them, rules for Hindu women, and to us Westerns they do indeed sound very strange.

Even those rules that regulate the after-lives of Hindu widows are, one imagines, made lighter both for the women themselves, and for the members of their families, for their parents, for instance, by the knowledge that they are general. Do not we all bear more easily the hardships that are common? Does not the knowledge that others are poor and unacclaimed, that men of the past have remained poor and unacclaimed, yet have not made too great a 'song about it,' help the single neglected writer, that one of the so sensitive breed, to bear up? The argument is not one to press too far, of course; but there is something in it, a something too generally never for a moment in the minds of those who denounce much of the treatment of Indian women.

These rules for the conduct of wives and widows, and the parallel rules for the conduct of men, for there are such rules (an Indian man has not, for instance, the freedom of address amongst his brothers that Englishmen have), were not imposed on Indian society by some whimsical tyrant. They arose out of the soul of this wide Eastern world. What the dreamers had to secure was that the civilization established in these lands should be imperishable, undecaying. That is, imperishable from any decay arising within it. It might be overthrown by men from beyond the seas; it might become corrupt from an evil example from outside. It was not to decay from within. How decay from within would subtly work no man knew. That is a thing never known. We are not sure that English society is not decaying

from within ; rather we know that it is decaying, or some of us think we do. We none of us know how that decay might have been prevented. Had we known, we should have taken steps. The Indian social legislators did not know exactly what evils they must guard against, or what good secure beyond making their society an undecaying one. We know no more. The Indian of to-day, looking back—he knows no more either. We none of us can be sure that this or that social rule is one that came from the prompting of the wisely intuitive dreaming soul, and has contributed to keep Indian society sweet, or whether it was prompted by some still not outgrown animal instinct, possibly by a sadistic nature. I would listen to no men on this subject but the Shakespeares of the world; I would trust no man's sense but the finest poet's, the inspired man's. All others, all psychologists, much more all social innovators, use weapons too blunt. Until I have heard Shakespeare speak, I will form no last judgment for myself, or not until the need to act makes the formation of a judgment imperative.

A thing indisputable is that Hindu society has perpetuated itself. It is very old. It was created; it anchored itself in the deepest souls of the people; it has not perished, but has persisted. That proves that there was salt enough in it to keep it sweet. The secret of its persistence may be simply that it is refined; that Hindu men and women generally had in them the capacity to respond to the aspirations of the best Hindus. One of their aspirations was to remain poor in this world's goods; relatively poor, I mean, and to lead simple lives. The decay of England will come from the vulgarity of the would-be rich. When Mr. Lloyd George, who cannot write, who will never add a line to literature, boasts that he has made more money as a writer, in how few years? than he drew as a cabinet minister during seventeen years, and when no one sees any harm in it, there being no ancient Roman, Abbot Samson, Chinese poet, or Indian Brahmin to listen, and judge him, what is speaking is the vulgarity of the would-be rich. The great mass of Hindu society remained for centuries determinedly poor.

One sees that it were better that they remained so for ever—better for their souls. Our example in striving to get rich quickly does them no good whatever.

I am not sure at all whether I can always distinguish between the simple life that I see as so good for the Indian (if you are to be rich, and lead a crowded national life such as England's, refinement in your society must be so deep, if your society is not to decay, that its influence extends to the last ploughman, as Indian and Chinese refinement extends to the last coolie; and how are you to be sure that you can leaven the lump with such refinement? Better, then, remain a society poor in this world's goods.) I am not sure at all, I repeat, whether I can always distinguish between the simple life that I see as so good for India, and the empty life that I mourn for her. If I had to decide for her, I should say, 'Better change nothing; the risk is too great.' If I see the life as empty, which I do, it may be only because I am myself a striving, ambitious, pushing, vulgar man.

If I may continue what is a little out of place in pages headed 'The Women,' there is a thing in Calcutta, known to a very few. It is called the '*Maidan Club*.' A few men meet late-evening after late-evening at the Roberts statue on the *maidan*, and sit on the plinth, and talk for an hour or more. You will find Mr. G. C. Bose of the Bangabasi College among them, and Sir P. C. Ray for another, that most lovable of men, that man the tones of whose speaking voice are so appealing, that they make you think of Orphic song. Sir P. C. Ray brings a newspaper, and spreads it to sit on. The others sit on the bare stone. That is their kind of simplicity. I have known both those men for twenty years and more. I know that they have done hard work, and are still hard at work; but I have wondered often how much they have done of it under a stimulus from us English; how much less of it they would have done, had we never come near them. Neither we nor any other foreigners. That they have worked as they have worked means that their lives have not been as empty in my sense; but in that

those talks on the plinth are their greatest pleasure of the day, which I am convinced is the case, their lives are empty in my sense. I sometimes attend the meetings of the club; at least I have done it once or oftener; oftener I have joined the men, walking part of their way home. I presume that I divert the current of the talk into other channels; I do not know what the range of talk is among themselves. I do not know, but I feel pretty certain that it is frequently as empty of intellectual pith as the talk of children. If I had to attend the meetings of the club nightly, I should soon be craving for the raw red meat of talk of what Professor Gordon calls 'fundamentals.'

Having said so much of the rules laid down for the conduct of Indian wives and widows, and having followed the train of thought that speaking of them led to, let me now come to Mrs. Urquhart's *Women of Bengal*, a book from which there is less to be learnt than from the novels perhaps, but where knowledge is presented compact. This is one of Mrs. Urquhart's paragraphs:

To be greeted by a Bengali woman of the secluded classes on the threshold of her home is to become aware immediately that India has treasures which she does not display to the common eye, and that here we have found something fine and rare. Her winsome and dignified manner reveals a personality that possesses 'quality.' And such quality can only be the fruit of a civilization and social culture not yet, perhaps, wholly understood or appreciated by the European. The European cannot be blamed for this lack of understanding [it is very stupid of him, all the same], because it is in large measure due to the very fact of the seclusion of Indian women. This seclusion has resulted, among other things, in a great part, and that the better part, of the life of the people being hidden from the foreigner [but you should add also that the foreigner did not look].

It is a pity that Mrs. Urquhart did not write that paragraph more carefully. One has only to stop for a moment and think, to see that the quality of a Hindu woman cannot

'only be the fruit of a civilization not wholly understood,' as if our not understanding Hindu civilization was what has made it what it is. (I talk of little-competence. You see there what it is, how it shows itself, in a writer.) Indian civilization made itself without any action or inaction on our part. It was made long before we appeared on the scene. One is thankful to have so certain a testimony as Mrs. Urquhart's for the fact that it has a great quality. The thing that it would be of most value to know is whence the quality came. I have noticed the promise of the quality in the mere looks and gestures of Indian children. A word has already been said of that. It is a thing as delicate as the bloom on a peach or a grape, or the dust on the wings of a moth. I have thought of it as coming as the combined result of things physical and spiritual; of centuries of bright sunshine, and of the sonority of Vedic song, heard morning and evening for countless generations. It is the quality of refinement. Mr. Havelock Ellis has a passage somewhere on the greater refinement of the Cornish compared with the English, Cornish civilization being, he says, by far the older of the two. He thinks that any civilization, if it be only old enough, refines the very nervous system. Refinement ceases to be a thing merely of the mind. It is in the blood and tissues.

Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, I remember, tells a story of his little sister; how she was made so angry by a monkey that snatched away their flowers and fruit, that she kicked it, and then how she wept to think that she had been made by a dumb creature to lose her little-maiden dignity. There you see, for the child cannot have been twelve, for she died at that age, I remember, a proof of the strength of the hereditary good-breeding of the race.

This is one of Mrs. Urquhart's pictures. She is describing the Bengali woman:

The lustre and expressiveness of her fine eyes, and the beauty of white and even teeth light up her face. The features are refined and sometimes of a classical regularity, and, in families where a careful selection of

good-looking brides has perfected the type, one sees occasionally young women of rare and fascinating beauty.

Her hair is plentiful, sometimes to an extent one had thought of as legendary, falling, when unbound, like a cloak to her ankles. It is glossy and of a blue-black hue, and its natural sheen is heightened by the constant application of oil and by frequent exposure to the rays of the sun. Natural curls are common enough [Sita of the *Ramayana* is always described as having curly, blue-black hair], but are not encouraged, as it is a sign of dignity and modesty [Mrs. Urquhart means that they think so] to have smoothly braided locks. On special occasions the braiding is done in intricate designs.

This is another of her pictures. I choose it for the charm of it.

The feet being untrammelled from childhood, are usually delicate in shape and expressive of refinement. Children at school pick up pencils, and even needles, very deftly with their toes, and often express embarrassment by curling and uncurling them, as we might do our fingers.

... Too much vivacity, 'bounce,' and impulsiveness, are considered unbecoming even in a young maiden. This standard of quietness is as old as Manu, who says: 'One should not be restless with hands or feet, or restless with the eyes.'

Add this. It is from *Caste and Outcaste*.

In the evening when our father, her lord, came home, he would send his servant to my mother's maid; and his servant would say, 'The lord of the house, now that he has bathed and is untainted by the dust of the street, wishes to see the goddess of the house, if she permits.' Then the maid, after delivering the message to my mother, would return and say, 'The consecrated one will receive you before the dusk hour.' After my mother had seen my father, came her evening meditation, lasting about an hour.

What is Miss Mayo's word of it all?

X

THE CHILDREN

BECAUSE of my great love for them, not because I think you will learn much or anything of Indian character from these particular pages, I would write about the children of India. As I have said, I had a great child-hunger; I was the more ready to see whatever charm the children might have. Equally ready was Emily Eden, however, and I do not know that she was very full of child-hunger. She wrote once to a sister at home, asking her if she could not have one brown baby for a change. There are other things in her letters from India that show how strongly the children here appealed to her eyes and heart.

The boys are not at all shy; the girls usually are a little. If you sit down in a tram beside a boy, and if the look of you interests him, he may look up into your face, and ask where you are going to. He will say simply: 'Where are you going to?' and you know that the no 'please' means simply that he has not been taught this foreign language at school quite well enough. A little girl would ask no question, but, if you are bicycling, and she passes in her father's car, if you look interestedly in her face, she will smile to you, although she may never have seen you before. If one day you call at a house, where you visit, and find that they are all out but two little girls, if you decide to sit in the garden until some of the bigger ones return, the two little girls will entertain you. They will stop their play, and stay with you and talk (probably one of them will do it all, the older); will offer you something to eat and drink. I have been smiled to by a little girl, passing in a car; have been entertained very charmingly by two little girls, and I do not count these things as nothing. I count them as so much, that I cannot forget them.

I was waiting one day in the botanical gardens here, seated on a bench, until the ferry boat should come. A very little girl, with a little bit of loin cloth on and nothing else, came running round a corner. She had not expected to find a sahib there; the sight of me stopped her—as if she had been frozen in her flight. She did not run away, but stood there regarding me long and fixedly. So I smiled to her. She smiled back, but it was a smile faint as the first breath of spring after winter. So I smiled again. The answering smile was bolder. It was then, I suppose, that I spoke to her; but I have forgotten what I said. I half remember that it was determined by a Hindi word that happened to be in my head before the child ran round the corner. It was the chief word in my sentence. After either the second smile or my speaking she drew nearer, not all as one progression, but first about half the distance, and then the remaining half. Finally she sat down on the bench beside me, pressing against me, I asking her questions, as who her father was and what he did, from which I learnt that she was a little *pahari*, or girl from the Hills, which accounted for her being less shy than the Plains girls. Finally she seated herself in my lap, and began stroking my cheek with the softest hand I had ever felt of hands no longer a baby's.

There have been other Indian children in my life, each for a little something, and if, as the world judges, they were all small things, they were big for me—with my child-hunger that it seemed would never be satisfied. The day's work took me during some years up and down very ugly cement stairs in a building in Bowbazar Street (no human being was ever meant by God to see such ugly stairs; steps until some point in time were always beautiful things; why are there so many hideous stairs now?) They were lit up, if a little girl was about, as she sometimes was. I had little games of chasing her or the like. She was the girl to whom I was moved to write this:

Her eyes were beautiful and glad,
With a quick light within,
Like sunbeams on the brightest sea,

As back I drew her face to me,
With hands beneath her chin,
Meaning to kiss, but One forbade.

Suddenly came the thought they had,
Who brought to Christ that day
The little children whom He blessed;
And then I said: 'The thought will rest
Within me, on my way,
Of eyes so beautiful and glad.'

Perhaps the kiss, too sweet, had been
As elfin-wand to touch
Into a woman that dream-child,
With mouth that never would have smiled,
And I have longed too much
For kisses on a face unseen.

Then there was the chowkidar's little boy at Maner in Bihar, where there is a great tank and a mausoleum and a mosque; and where I have spent evening hours, when the beauty of the late sunshine, and of the trees and ferns bathed in it—it is something in the light that makes everything so beautiful; nowhere but in the Indian Plains does one see just that beauty—was of a purity that makes speaking of it in worn words sound almost gross. One wants words that have never been used before. Those Maner hours were hours of great peace. Suddenly we came upon the boy seated by the side of the tank, and a little sister was beside him, with, on her almost infantile hip, a still smaller brother. 'A Botticelli face!' was my companion's word; my thought being that just so, with just such a composed little face, and those delicately long, curled lashes, must the child Sri Krishna have been.

I had seen the boy before, when we arrived. I see hundreds of boys, interesting to watch, but nothing special. Then I see one with whom I mean to be friends, so far as it is possible to be friends with a person in so different a world, and so seldom seen. There is a way; you do not speak; you just look into the eyes. The look says: 'You are not to think

of me as like the other sahibs who come. There is a difference. If I never come back, you are not to forget: if I do come back, you are to remember when I came before.' The eyes answer back a little sadly; 'What is it?' My part is to remember too, and if I am asked again to go to Maner, to have the thought of seeing the chowkidar's boy again as the first thought.

All this may seem very childish. How can any man care so much for things so small? I do not know, but only that I do care. There was a point on the Gariahat-road, which I used to go to, and there sit, looking across a stretch of paddy fields. Boys would collect, a few, seeing a sahib there where no other sahib sat. They would come and look at me. One I made friends with, though I never spoke to him. The others were as animals to me, and I disregarded them. The friendship with the one was something to me; it was a much bigger thing to my way of thinking than many of the things that you would have supposed were much more to me. You might not have known that it even existed; it was all so a thing of being near, and a smile, and a thought. We do not know what we are. When the visible universe is folded up as a vesture, and changed, what was begun among the ears of rice may endure. How do you know it will not? We know nothing for certain. If a man has an emotion that is not clearly impure, he should cherish it to the grave and beyond. I think so.

XI

ANIMALS

INDIA is said to sin grievously in its treatment of animals. Who in a sense does not? We must be fair; international courtesy requires that we should be scrupulously fair, when another nation is in question. So we must go deeper into this question of the treatment of animals than might to you seem necessary.

One has not to go far back in English history to come to an age when Englishmen cruelly ill-treated, in mines and in factories, the animals commonly called women and children. That was put a stop to, one man having great influence in the matter. About the time he had that influence Froude was telling Carlyle how certain English huntsmen, having failed to draw a fox, and meaning not to be done out of the day's sport, got a sheep dog, smeared aniseed on its pads, and set it to run and make sport for them. There would be a great outcry, if that was done to-day. Still, one may ask how deep in us is the feeling of kindness towards animals? How much is a man this or that, because to be it is the fashion of his day? How great a pleasure or profit would turn that fashion into its opposite? These are difficult questions to answer. I do not know the answers. I do know, however, how skin-deep things can be in men. A man I knew well was for years a light among the Plymouth Brethren. Then, deeply religious, searching his Bible still more closely for the revealed truth, he thought he saw the error of the Plymouth Brethren, the error of all professing Christians. So he departed on a lonely way of his own.

He was made of good old Devonshire stuff; had been in

the Navy, where he rose high, and retired an honoured man. How much of the spirit of Christianity was in the man? None at all, I should say; when he told you his opinion of Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Balfour, or the Muhammadans (those were his special detestations), he showed himself to be a pure pagan, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, man. I have met many men and women, women especially, like him—Christians in more than profession, those who would really be Christians, yet who were incurably pagan. Men may have two minds in them, and the two be walled off from each other. So I am not certain how kind to animals I am through and through me. I know that some of my kindness towards animals is, to put it so, dictated to me by the spirit of the hour (not to call it the fashion), while I allow, of course, that that spirit being the spirit is a credit to—To whom? To each Englishman a little? I am afraid not, but that it is the credit of a few: men who, being really humane, having had so much influence over the rest of us, that we have put our cruelty aside. I can remember not being made indignant, as a boy, by the sight of boys torturing insects. Black beetles—they caught them, pinned them to the wooden benches in the playground, and then with the sun and a magnifying-glass burned them to death. Nasty little boys. Yes, but how much of the nasty little boy is still in me?

I know that Indians, under the temptation of profits to be made, can be horribly cruel to animals. If a goat's skin, which you can sell for money, is worth more money if the goat is flayed alive, if you do not watch all the time goats will be flayed alive. Water-buffaloes, if you can make a little more out of them, by using them as draught animals, than you can make out of bullocks, will crowd the bullocks off the streets, though men know that the bullock is happy enough in the street, while the long hours out of water are torture to the buffalo. Had I been in the goat-skin trade, and had been the first to hear that the skin would be worth more, if you skinned the beasts alive, I think I should have said, 'Oh, but you couldn't do that,' meaning that I thought

it would be too cruel. Had I been in transport, and had been the first to think of using the buffalo, I think I'd have proceeded to do it. I should not have realized what I was doing.

I doubt if more can be said in utter truth than that there have been some English men and women with a passion of kindness for animals. The rest of us are subdued by forces and influences outside us to be kinder than our nature. I believe that those things could be said of Indians also, with this added, that the forces and influences outside each Indian are exceedingly weaker (that is perhaps a little too strong an expression) than those outside each Englishman. The child who decided when she was ten that she was a little Christian, and would say her prayers to Saint Anthony, is the Indian I have known myself in whom the love of animals was deepest. I used to go and see her for an hour of an evening, when she would sit with two kittens in her lap. She was the kind of person who, if she had a cat to take to another house, would take it in her arms, and get into a taxi, and go so. Out of any person's arms that the cat did not feel was a friend it would struggle in fear, on finding itself being carried away. I know that that girl once brought a cat and two kittens to this house, and I saw no sign of any basket. They were the same two kittens that had sat in her lap. Seeing the mother, or another cat, she would say such a thing as: 'I picked her up out of the gutter in the street. She was a tiny kitten, and so dirty and wretched, and she had a leg broken. I brought her here, and washed her, and put her leg in splints; and you would never think, would you, that she had had a broken leg.' Or it might be: 'That was another cat that I picked up in the street, and she had been hurt somehow, and that's why there's that squint in her tail.' Or: 'Once she was sick for days. If she ate anything she was sick immediately. So she wouldn't eat, and I was afraid she would die. So I took her in my lap, and thought a long time of her getting better, and then I said the Lord's Prayer aloud, very fervently, and went to bed, and she woke me in the morning, mewling for something to eat. She hadn't any more sickness.'

God knows that more of her spirit should be in her fellowcountrymen. Pray for them. There is probably nothing better to do.

I have a note, and here would be the best place for it. First to say that it was written before *Mother India* was published. I had been writing in Calcutta on behalf of the buffaloes of its streets. One of the extravagant things that I had suggested was that each English girl in the place should go without one new frock, and dances at Firpo's for a month, and buy a buffalo, and set it free. Now you will understand the allusion in my note.

The note is not all of it relevant in a chapter on the treatment of animals, but I think I will not cut it down. In a book on the character of India, there should be word of the setting; for it is not without its influence. If I could make the book half as long again, I would fill that half with words of the Indian settings. Suffer, then, one such word.

. . the house was in the Chajoo Bagh, that place of fine trees and rose gardens. I had sat out in it the night before until midnight, it being there wonderfully cool, though there was no wind. The moon had been full, and shone all the time, and in its light the mango trees were of a most impressive blackness. On the table on which I am writing is a brass mug of red roses, the third or fourth they have brought to me. In the garden, at that late hour, I talked of letter-writing with a man who seemed to have made his exercise of that art as much of a piece of an honeycomb, a sweet thing in his life, as I have done myself.

In the evening I had been for a walk along the canal bank that you come to some way beyond Patna in the direction of Dinapore. You pass little villages, and at this time of the year you will see the unmuzzled oxen treading out the corn. Four or five of them, yoked to a pole, walk round and round until their feet have separated the grain from the straw or millet stalks. The villagers then gather the grain into great yellow heaps, and the straw or stalks they tie in bundles, and place upright in stacks. Against the sides of the heaps of grain

they lean to a covering of straw, to keep the grain clean, one supposes, or to prevent the wind blowing it away. Those village threshing-floors are full of lights and touches that are good to the eyes, especially of a city man. Then there are the cattle, the oxen and the buffaloes. Has any Calcutta girl procured the release of a buffalo? I suggested it. I am only another voice crying, so I suppose nothing was done. Having seen the buffaloes on that canal bank, I still more want to see something done.

One buffalo that I strode past quickened its step to come up to me, so I turned back to look better at it. Remembering the eyes of the buffaloes in the Calcutta streets, it was at its eyes that I looked. They were a soft and velvety blackness, like wells of perpetual peace, really wonderful things to look into. A little later two young oxen were led past me. They had such beautiful faces and bodies, were so alike, so exactly of a size, were so spotlessly clean, and so spoke of health and profound content, that I immediately exclaimed: 'But they are Castor and Pollux.' They were two Greek gods appearing, as men are too vulgar-eyed, as oxen. They should have been led by a wood-god, or a pasture-god, for oxen and woods do not go together. 'I will tell Queen Chajoo of those oxen, when I write,' I added, that being the name that I had chosen in my play to give a girl to whom I was under a promise to write from Chajoo Bagh. Letter-writers make constant play with names and changes of name. But perhaps I am giving away too many secrets, which is not a thing to do.

XII

INDIAN LITERATURE, I

THE greatest treasures of Indian literature are in verse. Moradali and the grandfather who learnt his geography out of the *Meghaduta*, and the boy would say that that was right. They would say that nothing, really, is said in prose; that when a thing is sung, then at last it is expressed. I should not go quite so far, but far enough. If a thing can possibly be said in verse, let it be. A man's best book on the character of India would be poetry. If I thought you could read poetry, I would have tried to write this little book in verse. Just as the Thunder melody, according to Moradali, has been lost—for how many thousand years is it?—so the power to read poetry has been lost. If a thing is said in poetry, that is, in words melodious, and deeply metaphorical, it is invulnerable. If it is said in prose, there is always a loophole through which men may slip. When Milton says:

It was that fatal and perfidious Bark,
Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine,

there are no questions you can ask. When Arnold says that poetry is a criticism of life, there are many questions for a wise man to ask, and the obvious one—what is a criticism of life?—for even fools to ask. When Arnold writes a paper on De Guérin, full of good things as an egg is full of meat, men ask who De Guérin was, that a man of Arnold's calibre should spend time over him, and so do not read the essay, and Arnold's labour is all lost. (Perhaps you will read it soon? It is worth it.) If Arnold had written what he had to

say of De Guérin, or even a village sloven, in verse, it would have been read, and, if a great enough poem, again and again. So it is not a small thing that I can say that India has known to write all that she held greatly important in verse. She did so.

The poetry that I am going to speak of is modern poetry, not the ancient poetry of India. You might say that the ancient Sanskrit poetry could be held to prove nothing as to the character of India to-day, and I should not really know if it would be right to contradict that. I will tell you, then, of modern poetry only. Not of Tagore's, because it is already known in England, and because I do not know it myself as well as I know other Indian poetry. There is something to be learnt of the character of India in every line of the poems that follow; but you must read carefully, and it should be remembered that no poetry was ever really and deeply appreciated by any man until he had read it so many times, that he knew it almost by heart.

Know, too, as important, that Dr. Edward Thompson and Mr. Arthur Spencer, men who have spent long years among up-country Bengalis, and have translated much of the poetry, assure us that the poems that follow are almost all of them well known throughout Bengal, that village people may be heard singing them out-of-doors. I may wake in the middle of the night, and listen until I fall asleep again to a policeman on guard singing quietly to himself. It will be real poetry that he is singing, such poetry as follows. He is doing what a Hebrew policeman would be doing, if he sang some of the psalms or Solomon's Song. That is not an unimportant point. It goes with the observed character of India. But a man must have been in India, and not insensitive, as too many are, to know what the observed India really is. You must do your best, remembering the courtesy required of you.

This is a very famous song. There is much in it, note, to recall the psalms. The common people sing it. Ramprasad wrote it. He wrote, by the way, all the others that I am to give until I mention another poet's name.

No longer I call you Mother, who have sent
 Me countless ills, and countless others send.
 Dear ones I had, a home to me, a friend.
 But you have made of me a mendicant.
 What worse can you, O Long-Tressed Goddess, do?

I must, a beggar, go from door to door.
 But should the mother die,
 Lives not the child? I cry
Mother, and again I cry,
 But deaf and blind are you.

The mother lives, yet the child suffers so—
 What is his mother's use to him? I say:
 'Is this a mother's way—
 To be her own child's foe?
 I muse both night and day
 What I should do, I, when
 You make me to endure
 The pangs of birth again and yet again.'

This is another very famous one, one the common people know and sing. Note the quietly beautiful close. The nim (a tree) is noted for bitterness.

'Tis but the hope of hope this coming
 Into the world, and ends in coming.
 The black bees' error, when they fall
 On lotus limned. The nim you call
 Sugar, with nim-leaves *you* to feed
 This one, deceiving! In my greed,
 Mother, for sweets my day have I
 With embittered lips and wry
 Spent. You saying: 'Let us play,'
 Have brought me, Mother, this earth-way;
 But in the game played me around
 My hope has no fulfilment found.

'What was to be, in the world-play,
 Has been,' suffer Prasad to say.
 'Drawing your child now to your side,
 Go you home at eventide.'

That is the same cry as the cry of the tired and disillusioned man, who would fain be 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'

The next poem is a famous one, too. Read it very slowly; its power comes out better so.

Wherefor so anxious, Mind? Let Kali's name be said.
In meditation sit you too.
From all this pomp of worship pride is bred;
Worship in secret, you.
What is your gain from metal shapen, earth, or stone?
Her image make—no art—
Of stuff of mind; on your heart's lotus-throne
Set it for aye apart.
Parched rice and plantains—to offer them how weak
To satisfy your mind!
Feed her with nectar of devotion. Wherefor seek
With lamp, you blind,
And lantern, candle, to illumine her? Oh, light
Mind's jewelled lamp;
Let it its lustre flash both day and night.
Wherefor this earthly tramp
Of sheep, goats, buffaloes brought for sacrifice?
These words repeat,
'Victory to Kali': offer the sixfold vice.
Why tomtoms, drums to beat?
Clap hands; sing Victory; and lay mind at her Feet.

That is a poem on the foolishness and uselessness of sacrifices and ritual. Miss Mayo, and all her brothers and sisters of the White Race, might learn from it. Certain psalmists asked what was the good of slaughtering bulls and goats, which maketh not man's heart clean. Here is one of the Brown Race asking the same. 'If You yourself are blind,' he asks, 'what is the profit in lighting of lantern, lamp, or candle on altar or elsewhere?' Not a question that can be answered. Seeing how difficult it is for the human mind to hold steadily in it the thought that 'in Him we live and move and have our being'; seeing that, and seeing how difficult it is for a man to live every act of his life in the

light of that knowledge, for him to begin to be interested in altar cloths and cups and consecrated bread and wine is for him to withdraw his tired mind into such play as he seeks relaxation in at his theatre; and if he denies it, arguing that cloths, cups, and bread and wine are important, he is a liar, and he lies. That is not worship; that is man-child play. To deny it is to lie. All Europe and America lies about its ritual. It is not seemly for liars to be heard talking of the weakness and vice of the men of another race. They still sacrifice goats and buffaloes; bring parched rice and plantains; light lamp and candle—being men-children, afraid; but it is not for us to say so. 'Remove first the beam that is in thine own eye. . . .'

The next poem sets forth the manner of the soul's sleep of death. Change the wording here and there, and the poem will set forth your own soul's sleep of death.

Drowsy with longing, you wake not ; excellent you have found

Time's bed. From this night of bliss, think you, will be no dawn?

Desire sits in your lap, like to a harlot crowned.

You will not turn from her. The sheet of hope is drawn

Over your body; face muffled, to uncover you refuse;

Winter and summer alike an unwashed cloth you use.

You are held down by the stupor of the wine that you have drunk—

The wine of worldly possession—and you utter not Kali's name;

Not even absent-mindedly. O foolish Prasad, so sunk

In hunger for sleep, that sleep does not appease the same,

In this you sleep the great sleep, the last that comes to all,

Will come, and you will wake not, although we call and call.

There is no asking any questions of that. It is great poetry; melodious and deeply metaphorical.

I have been told that that man Prasad was a poor Post Office clerk, or something no better. If he stood up, looking at us—if he knew all that he thought of us, we should turn ashamed away. Think of it.

Of the next poem a word of explanation must first be said. In Kali's unbound tresses Ramprasad sees a symbol of strength in freedom. The forfeiture spoken of is of life. 'The water of love,' an expression borrowed from their prose translation,¹ Dr. Thompson and Mr. Spencer explain as *Bhakti*, that is, passionate, ecstatic devotion.

Knowest not, Mind, to farm? In the untilled field
 Would golden harvest wave, so thou hadst sown.
 Make of her name a fence, that so the yield
 Be not destroyed. Not Death himself, O Mind,
 Dare come nigh Kali of the tresses free.
 When forfeiture will come is all unknown—
 To-day, or after many a century.
 Lo, to thy hand the present time, O Mind.
 Haste thou, and harvest. What they gave to thee,
 The seed thy teachers gave, scatter it now:
 With water of love it sprinkle. If alone,
 O Mind, thou canst not this accomplish, thou
 Alone, take Ramprasad to be with thee.

Lo, to thy hand the present time!

The next two poems are expression of thought that must for ever, in its dreadness, be strange to us. There is much in the Indian mind that we Westerns cannot hope to understand.

Ever in battle dancing, Mother. Never
 Beauty like thine, as, with thy flowing hair,
 Naked, a warrior, on Siva's breast thou dancest;
 Around thy neck, hung as a garland there,
 Heads of thy sons, killed freshly daily;
 Thy ear-rings little children are.
 Thy waist adorned with hands; thy lips so lovely;
 Thy teeth as Kunda flowers in blossoms are.
 Thy face is bright even as the lotus-flower,
 Its constant smiling terrible. And fleet
 In beauty as the rain-clouds is thy figure,
 And stained with blood all over are thy feet.
 Prasad says: 'As the dancer's is my mind.
 Such beauty to behold my eyes doth blind.'

¹ *Bengali Religious Lyrics. Sakta.* Thompson and Spencer. I commend the book warmly.

Come down from Hara's breast, and dance no more,
 You mad old hag. Siva, not dead, doth live.
 He, the great saint, is lost in meditation.
 So strong those feet of yours are that with
 Your dancing you'll break Bhola's ribs.
 You know Siva the poison swallowed; so
 His strength is gone. Mother, come down and do
 Your dancing, you who are loved by Siva. Who
 The poison could not kill, why should he die
 To-day? The poet saith:
 'Now he is feigning death,
 Just to possess your bloodstained Feet thereby.'

Dr. Thompson has said of the next poem: 'This song is recalled by Rabindranath Tagore in a well-known song in *Gitimalya* (see *Fruit Gathering*, 51); but his translation is only a brief *précis* of the Bengali, omitting the opening lines "I know this day will pass".' The cowrie that Ram-prasad, the wretched one, must find, is for the ferryman, of course. There are no questions to be asked of this poem either. It is invulnerable. (Not that I mean that my paraphrase is.)

This day will pass, this day
 Will pass, and rumour stay.
 Mother, 'gainst Tara's name
 Endless will be the blame.
 By the world's bathing-ghat
 To sell my wares I sat;
 To the world's mart I came.
 The Sun ~~our~~ Lord in flame
 Is set: the ferryman
 Came, and so many ran,
 They fill the boat; behind
 Is left one poor and weak.
 This wretched one—how find
 The cowrie that they seek?
 Prasad says: 'Stony-hearted
 Girl, look back. Give me
 A place. Singing to thee,
 Mother, will I, not parted,
 Plunge in the world's great sea.'

Those are all Sakta poems, as the next, which is not one of Ramprasad's, but by Maharaja Ramkrishna of Nator, is also. The poet's thought is that he has been placed in the Ganges to die. On the forepart of his head his doom had been written. The poem should be read aloud, very slowly.

When my mind is failing, then does Kali's name
Whisper in my ear, as I lie on my sandy bed.
This body is not mine—by passions it is sped
Along the flood. Oh, bring, Forgetful One, the same
Rudraksha berry rosary. Ramkrishna in his dread
Sayeth: 'Neglectful, thou, of my weal art now to blame;
Careless of what is writ on the forepart of my head.'

The East is always near to crying, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In all its languages it has cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*. Try, when next you are prompted to utter some harsh judgment of the East, to remember *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*. Has God not forsaken you also?

XIII

INDIAN LITERATURE, II

THOSE are all Sakta lyrics. These that follow are Vaishnava lyrics, or are inspired and influenced by the Vaishnava cult. The Sakta lyrics are patently religious poems: the Vaishnava lyrics are not so openly, but they are equally religious poems to the Indians themselves. Any one who would see that clearly has to open a door that does not open easily to a Western. To him the poems are just love poems. Well, take them as that. You may not learn all you might learn from them of the character of India, but you will learn something.

In the poem that follows the lotus is Radha. The basket of bitter nim leaves signifies separation, the bitterest of things. The wild rice that groweth sweet is some girl, Radha's rival. Beautiful similes, both of them. To me a people that will figure separation from the loved one as a basket of bitter nim leaves, and the girl with whom the loved one is, as wild rice that grows sweet, is an adorable people.

For the fragrant ~~malodorous~~ tree—and serving
It, I thought desire ~~would~~ be fulfilled—
I mistook him; but simul tree merely,
Thou ~~fragrantless~~, he proves to be.
Madhav, though where I dwell he dwelleth,
Hath become enamoured of another. *
I, a damsel lovely, so accomplished—
I have lost my pride and all my beauty.

Friend, the lotus thrown into the basket,
Made of bitter nim leaves, withereth,
And the wild rice groweth sweet and blooming.

It hath chanced my Love this day is coming
After days spent with her—Oh, so many!—
But how meet whom now my heart distrusteth?

Of all the Vaishnava lyrics that I know, there is not one
that I think more beautiful than that. These two are very
charming:

I

The night is dark; the sky is overcast.
Only the lightnings flash in the sky's ten corners,
And down the rain pours, thick and cold and fast;

Yet Radha, the darling, now with maidens few,
Hasteneth to the grove to meet her Lover;
And she is muffled in clinging scarf of blue.

Since Love, new wakened, maketh strong the weak,
Radha hath kept the tryst, but not her Lover.
Him, therefore, Jnanadasa goeth to seek.

II

The night is dark; clouds thunder overhead.

How will he come to me,

Who wait expectantly,

Wistfully seated on my preparèd bed?

What other thing, O Friend, could there be done?

Love brought me all the way,

Taught not to fear or stay.

How without sight of him to endure till night is run?

My dreams are gone: the lightning scorcheth sore

My heart; the thunder roll

Re-echoes in my soul.

But Jnanadasa sayeth: 'Your Love is at the door.'

Vidyapati wrote the first poem, and Jnanadasa, the
second and third. Narottama Dasa wrote this one:

In my pride I built a palace,
And my Lover was to hold me there;
In his arms, like wine within a chalice,
All the night long that the moon made fair.

When the cuckoo callèd with his voice
Unto his mate, I clad myself in robes
Whose colours were to make my Love rejoice,
And so these ornaments and pearly globes.

Some one unknown hath lured my Love away:
Broken my palace—who could think such sin?
How shall I live the whole night through till day,
Outside the joy all others pant within?

These betels spiced and camphored—unto whom
To give them now? and ye, Malati flowers,
Wreathed to make glad my Lover in this room,
How shall I breathe throughout the lonely hours?

Why do I not die quickly? Is there still
Hope in these breasts that only feel their woes?
'Patience, my Lady; soon you have your will.'
So saying, Narottama Dasa goes.

It was Chandidas who wrote this:

Oh, love, oh, love—so love is sweet, say men?
Why is my loving full of venom then?

So no more among talkers will I roam,
But to my loveliness make love at home.

Being thus calmed, shall I not win the whole—
So to be reconciled to my own soul?

Saith Chandidas, the twice-born: 'Nay, for your
Beauty will win him. Oh, but that is sure.'

This is one of Vidyapati's:

Radha with vermillion the sun on her forehead traced,
And the stars with scented earth, and the moon with sandal
paste.

The expectation of finding her Lover that she had,
At the trysting-place, when the hour came, was making
the Maiden glad.

In an arrow imitated, and as the arrow fair,
Like the Love-God's floral dart, the Maiden dressed her
hair.

O Madhava, she dressed herself, but with a clever friend
To help. A look of compassion she knew to send at the end.

She adorned her hair with champaka, and with fresh leaves
from the bud
Of Ketaki, and her body with powder of musk she rubbed.

Cleverly thus by the sign of the leaves and by the sign of the
flower¹
The Maiden indicated when she wished the trysting hour.

Says Vidypati: 'Hear me, O unclouded spirit, bright,
As Rupanatayan knoweth, comes the darkling, new-moon
night.

Let me pass now to the work of the late Mr. C. R. Das, or Chittaranjan Das, as I prefer to call him. It is as wrong for a man whose name is Chittaranjan Das to let himself be called Mr. Das, as it would have been for Marcus Tullius Cicero to let himself be called Mr. Cicero. It does not sound well, does it?

Mr. R. C. Bonnerjee, a well-known figure in Calcutta, a man whose hobby is the reviewing of books (that is another scrap on the subject of the character of India; there might so easily be no Indian whose hobby was the reviewing of English books), had this one day in a review of a book containing some translations of Indian poems, one of them being Chittaranjan's *Sagar Sangit*: 'The writer of this review once had the privilege of submitting a translation of *Sagar Sangit* or *Songs of the Sea* to the Rt. Hon. Herbert Fisher, who was much impressed—so he said—by the depth of their poetic feeling.' The paraphrases that follow are not of that poem-cycle, but of other poems of Chittaranjan. This is one of them, it is called *A Prayer*:

¹ They are associated with night.

Thou art the life of the Universe; to me
 The light of day art, and the dark of night;
 Activity's field, when I do wake and see;
 In sleep, my dream. Oh, Life of Life, the light
 Thou art to me of day, the dark of night.

Relieve me of my vice and virtue; make
 My heart void, and this heart, made empty, fill
 With thy entirety. Thy excelling take
 And make me great with it. Enfold me still
 Within thee: cover me, Protector bright,
 My light of day who art, and dark of night.

This one is called *You and I*:

This my love, coming from my heart, doth play
 Daily in your beauty. At the close
 Of the pleasure-fatigue my eyes, so eager-bright,
 Are lulled in your sweet bosom to repose.
 My desire, dear Maid, asks but to be consumed
 By day and night, and drops upon your frame,
 Upon the whole it drops ever and anon,
 Mad with the longing to satisfy its flame.
 My mind, dear Friend, like poet in frenzy held,
 Composes a hundred songs, and together strands
 The choicest flowers of pleasure and of pain,
 Down at your feet to pour them with his hands.
 You and I are so near, yet do we keep
 Afar, placing a light to blaze between.

One is struck by the frequency of references to song in Chittaranjan's poetry, and of similes drawn from song-writing; and there are poems the subject of which is singing. Indeed it emerges that, in his mind, singing and living are one; song is life and life is song. The next poem is entitled *Song*, and another one begins:

What shall I sing, what quivering song of despair?
 So many songs in my heart, but so many mistakes
 Committed again and again—

that is, in living, not in singing. If man lived as he should,
was the thought, he would sing as he should; the imperfec-
 tion of song is the imperfection of life—a thought I have had
 myself. But now for *Song*:

The songs that swell in my breast and fill my soul, from thee
 Their life get, thou majestic, eternal; thou great sea
 Of life, as a ripple is in the surging billows, such
 Am I. With thy spirit float me; in the transport of thy
 touch

Immerse me. In thy song let petty songs be stilled.
 Touch me, and be my soul with song eternal filled.

'In thy song'—then the divine life is song too. Divine life
 is eternal song. A thought!

This is a fine one:

THE DAWN

When, beautiful Dawn, dream-held, did you arise?

By the side of night, dream-lulled, you lay.

In golden apparel when did you robe the skies,

And tint heaven with the delicate flush of day?

Black night enveloped you, but you have bound

Her tresses dark, O Maid, with loving care.

Smiles on your lips play; in your lotus-eyes—

Pure, innocent bliss is there.

With nimble feet you have come anear, and crowned

My head, touching my eyes with scented hair.

Now at your lips I am gazing with surprise.

Of ruddy delight they are full. The end of night

Has come; I touch the apron of the bright;

My heart, late sleep-benumbed, fills with delight.

The end of that is the best—'I touch the apron of the bright.'

There is a strange poem, called *Misery*. Which of us
 ever thought of misery as an eternal fay? It is Eastern
 thought—to call misery a fay—of that kind that one doubts
 the West ever understanding. This is the poem:

I know thee, Misery. A wondrous fairy, you keep me

From life's sweets ever. You pluck away

From the living the myriad life-flowers. In guise of kissing

Blood to drink! So make death within me play

At every breath. Hold me in death's embracing:

With thy flowing tresses darken all the way.

The whole of thy life is a mysterious dalliance.

Playful thou art by night, playful by day.

Ever art drinking, thou maiden, oh, thou thirsty.

Thou who my hope, my fear, love, bliss art aye.
Thy kiss within me is burning ever,
Thou my beloved—oh, thou eternal fay.

I thought I would keep the best to the end. This one:

A DREAM

The sombre night, dreadfully dreary, like wordless
Eternity's mystery. I woke from sleep,
And opened my eyes. The world, internal, external
Was wrapped in darkness deep.

All of a sudden emerged, in the midst of darkness,
The ideal figure of my heart;
The lips of beauty beaming brightly, peerless,
Clear in the white moon-part;
The eyes seen as the evening lamp before
The image within from without the twilit door.

It did not utter a word, but silent, standing,
Was as a god austere,
Fearless and wordless, but with countenance smiling.
Desire shivered. Now clear,
Now vanished; her hair's dark mass, in sleep,
In the sky pencilled deep.

XIV

'HINDUISM IS SELF-CONDEMNED'

S AID a reader of Miss Mayo's book, 'Hinduism, by tolerating such iniquities, and even enjoining some of them, is self-condemned.' 'Whose Hinduism?' one might have asked; 'Ramprasad's, the Hinduism of the man with the *rishi*-like smile and *puja* in his heart, or some other's?' Quite a fair question. One would think it absurd to say, because a man with syphilis had been admitted to hospital, and had died there, and he a so-called Christian, that Christianity tolerated that, and so was self-condemned. If Christianity was what Christians throughout the centuries have practised, one would be sorry to be it. So of Hinduism: if it was what some Hindus have practised, and others to this day are practising, one would be sorry to be it. But it is as much what the purest-souled Hindu is practising, a Chaitanya, than it is the superstition of this or that brutal creature; or rather it is more the former. There is, in a strict enough sense, no such thing as a Hinduism tolerating this and enjoining that. There have been Hindus, and they were what they were; there are Hindus, and they are what they are.

If a pagan wanted to know what Christianity was, one would ask him to read the New Testament. So, if a Christian wants to know what Hinduism is, one would ask him to read the books. If he did, and if afterwards he mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, he would see that among Hindus there is a great deal of degradation, superstition, and so on, but he would know that they were tares growing among the wheat. He would remember other tares that he had seen. If he was utterly strict with himself, he would not confound even bad practices in a Hindu temple, if he

found any such, with the Hinduism of which he had read. He would not do that any more than he would have confounded the practices of licentious monks of times past (have there not been such?) with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Hinduism would always be for him the doctrine of the *Bhagavadgita*, Chaitanya, and the saints of Hinduism. 'The only Christian life that I can think of as Christian,' a man might say, 'is the life of such a one as Saint Francis.' So another might say, 'The only Hindu life that I can think of as Hindu is the life of such a one as Ramprasad.'

That is all I had to say about that. I have nothing more to say about anything. If I have not already said expressly that I love and admire the Indians, I would say that. If I have not already said expressly that I think it was utterly odious of an American woman to write *Mother India*, I say that now.

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